



May 9th, 2017

Notice Of Meeting

You are invited to attend the Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism Committee meeting to be held on **Monday, 8th May 2017 at 5:00 pm** in the **Boardroom, Monaghan Row.**

Chair: Cllr R Burgess

Vice: Cllr D Curran

Members: Cllr T Andrews

Cllr N Bailie

Cllr A McMurray

Cllr W Clarke

Cllr C Casey

Cllr G Hanna

Cllr H Harvey

Cllr T Hearty

Cllr D McAteer

Cllr B Quinn

Cllr M Ruane

Cllr G Stokes

Cllr Tinnelly

Agenda

- 1) Apologies and Chairpersons remarks.
- 2) Declarations of Interest.
- 3) Action Sheet - Minutes of Enterprise Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting held on Monday 10 April 2017. (Copy circulated)

📎 *Item 3 - Action Sheet - ERT April 2017.pdf*

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Enterprise, Employment and Regeneration Items

- 4) Warrenpoint Municipal Park - HLF Regeneration Project. (Copy circulated)

📎 *Item 4 - Rpt re Warrenpoint Municipal Park HLF Project.pdf*

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- 5) Review of Outdoor Recreation Legislation - DAERA. (Copy circulated)

📎 *Item 5 Rpt re Review of Outdoor Recreation legislation relating to DAERA.pdf*

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- 6) Update re: Superfast and Rural Broadband. (Copy circulated)

📎 *Item 6 - Rpt re Broadband.pdf*

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- 7) Report re Downpatrick Hotel Provision. (Copy attached)

📎 *Downpatrick Hotel cover sheet.pdf*

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📎 *Downpatrick Hotel Feasibility Study (Draft) May 2017.pdf*

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- 8) PSNI Site - Downpatrick. (Copy circulated)

📎 *Item 8 Rpt re Former PSNI Station Downpatrick.pdf*

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Tourism, Culture and Events Items

- 9) Update re: Slieve Gullion Forest Park. (Copy circulated)

📎 *Item 9 Rpt re Slieve Gullion Forest Park - investment programme.pdf*

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10) Revamp - Exhibitions at Newry & Mourne Museum. (Copy circulated)

📄 *Item 10 Rpt re Revamp of Displays at Newry Museum.pdf*

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11) Festival of Flight. (Copy circulated)

📄 *Item 11 Rpt re Attendance at the Royal International Air Tattoo July 2017.pdf*

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For Noting

12) Action Tracker Update - ERT. (Copy attached)

📄 *Item 12 ACTIONS TRACKING UPDATE.pdf*

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13) Marine Protected Area Management Scheme. (Copy circulated)

📄 *Item 13 Rpt re Strangford Lough Marine Protected Area Management.pdf*

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Invitees

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Cllr William Walker	william.walker@nmandd.org
Mrs Marie Ward	marie.ward@nmandd.org

ACTION SHEET – ENTERPRISE REGENERATION & TOURISM COMMITTEE MEETING**MONDAY 10 APRIL 2017**

Minute Ref	Subject	Decision	Lead Officer	Actions taken/ Progress to date	Remove from Action Sheet Y/N
ERT/068/2017	Forkhill Green Space Scheme	<p>Council to enter into and sign a Licence Agreement with Forkhill Parish Church for an access area on Church/School property to provide a third entry point to the newly installed Forkhill Greenspace Project.</p> <p>Council to utilise at least £10,000 funding from it's 2017/2018 Capital Contribution set against this scheme to match fund additional DEARA monies to cover additional contract works that had to be carried out on site.</p> <p>Council accept an additional DEARA Letter of Offer amount (£30,000) for the Forkhill Greenspace Project.</p>	S Crossey	Ongoing	N

Minute Ref	Subject	Decision	Lead Officer	Actions taken/ Progress to date	Remove from Action Sheet Y/N
ERT/069/2017	Business Development Programmes of Support	<p>To deliver the following business engagement activities:</p> <p>SRC Crest Programme that will provide training opportunities to the unemployed</p> <p>Mentoring Programme for existing businesses</p> <p>Short term business development workshops, ie, digital marketing, brand development, procurement, e-commerce, sales development, idea generation for new starts.</p>	A Smyth	Development of programmes underway; services to be procured	N
ERT/070/2017	Interreg Europe Project – Inside Out of EU	To participate on the Stakeholder Group with the DFE for the implementation of the Interreg Europe Project: Inside Out of EU.	A Smyth	Participation as requested by the DFE on the steering group for the Interreg Europe Project: Inside Out EU	Y
ERT/071/2017	Dept for Economy Industrial Strategy Consultation Response	To approve the Industrial Strategy consultation response as presented, and submit same in advance of the closure date on Tuesday 25 April 2017.	M Patterson	Response submitted to the Department for the Economy and receipt of	Y

Minute Ref	Subject	Decision	Lead Officer	Actions taken/ Progress to date	Remove from Action Sheet Y/N
				response received.	
ERT/072/2017	Newry Chamber: Trade Visit to Szczecin Poland	To appoint Chairperson of Council and 1 No. Council Officer to attend the Newry Chamber of Trade & Commerce, business trip to Poland.	M Ward	Actioned via Newry Chamber	Y
ERT/073 /2017	Service Level Agreement Kilkeel Development Association	To approve the Service Level Agreement with Kilkeel Development Association with a budget of £20,000 and a Co- operative Marketing Campaign valued at £10,000 on Coastal Flavour.	M Boyle	SLA to be agreed and issued.	N
ERT/075/2017	Clanbrassil Barn & Tea Rooms Tollymore Forest Park	The Council, in partnership with DAERA (Forest Service) seek Expressions of Interest from interested parties for service provision in Clanbrassil Barn & Tea Rooms at Tollymore Forest Park.	M Boyle	EOI to be agreed with Forest Service prior to advertising.	N
ERT/076/2017	Wardens House Kilbroney Park Rostrevor	To approve a one year lease of the Wardens House at Kilbroney Park Rostrevor, to the proposed tenant, at a rental cost of £200 per month. Electricity, heating,	M Boyle/B Magill	Brief for advertising to be agreed.	N

Minute Ref	Subject	Decision	Lead Officer	Actions taken/ Progress to date	Remove from Action Sheet Y/N
		<p>insurance, rates, etc will not be included in the rental figure but will be paid separately by the Lessee.</p> <p>It was also agreed to include the possibility of a 2 year extension to the lease if required.</p>			
ERT/077/2017	Newry Agricultural Show	The Council work with Newry Show Committee to develop a range of interventions and programmes to support both agri food and agriculture sectors.	J McGilly	Work in progress	N
ERT/078/2017	Policies Newry & Mourne Museum Accreditation Application	<p>To approve the following policies to be supplied with a signed copy of the Council Minutes, to the Northern Ireland Museums Council, as a central part of the Museum's Accreditation application in June 2017:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collections Development Policy - Documentation Policy - Access Policy Statement - Environmental Sustainability Policy Statement - Collections Care and Conservation Policy Statement 	N Cunningham	Ongoing	Y

Minute Ref	Subject	Decision	Lead Officer	Actions taken/ Progress to date	Remove from Action Sheet Y/N
ERT/079/2017	Familiarisation Visit to Strangford	To approve the familiarisation visit to Strangford and the surrounding area in June 2017.	M Ward	Ongoing	N
ERT/080/2017	Tourism Events Support 2017/2018	<p>To approve a financial contribution in the sum of £10,000 to the following non-Council led music festivals/events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 19th International Blues on the Bay Festival Warrenpoint 24-29 May 2017 - SOMA Festival Castlewellaan 14-23 July 2017 - Fiddlers Green Festival Rostrevor 21-30 July 2017 - Iur Cinn Fleadh Newry 7-10 September 2017 - Newry Chamber Music Mid Summer Festival/programme June 2017 <p>To approve a financial contribution in the sum of £5,000 to be granted to the following non-Council led key tourism events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - GI Jive Festival Kilkeel 29 July – 4 August 2017 - Newry City Pride Festival 	M Mohan	Ongoing	N

Minute Ref	Subject	Decision	Lead Officer	Actions taken/ Progress to date	Remove from Action Sheet Y/N
		Newry 2 September 2017 To investigate capacity building workshops to support local community groups to set up and run festivals/events.			
ERT/081/2017	Festival of Flight Flying Display Director	To approve extension of appointment of the Festival of Flight Flying Display Director 2017, in line with the decision taken the ERT Committee Meeting held on 9 May 2016.	M Mohan	Ongoing	Y
ERT/082/2017	Conference: Developing & Managing Recreation in Protected Areas	To approve a contribution in the sum of £2,500 to co-host a Conference on Developing and Managing Recreation in Protected Areas, to be held in the Ti Chulainn Cultural Centre Mullaghbawn in September 2017.	M Mohan	Ongoing	Y
ERT/083/2017	Student Placement 2017/2018	To appoint 2 No. placement students from the Tourism Marketing and Events Management Degree Courses at the University of Ulster,, to assist in the delivery of Tourism Events.	M Mohan	Ongoing	Y
END					

Report to:	Enterprise Regeneration and Tourism Committee
Date of Committee Meeting:	8 th May 2017
Subject:	Recommendations from Warrenpoint Municipal Park HLF Regeneration Project Steering Group – 24/04/2017
Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):	Marie Ward, Director Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism
Contact Officer (Including Job Title):	Shirley Keenan Project Development Officer Heritage Lottery Fund

1.0	Purpose and Background:												
1.1	<p>The Warrenpoint Municipal Park HLF Regeneration Project Steering Group met on the 24/04/2017..</p> <p>The Warrenpoint Municipal Park Heritage Lottery Fund Regeneration Project is part funded by the National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Parks for People Programme.</p> <p>The proposed project to restore and regenerate Warrenpoint Park aims to enhance access to the heritage of the park by providing a comprehensive upgrade of facilities and an associated development programme. This will ensure the sustainability of the park following much needed investment.</p> <p>Key dates and milestones for the Main Contract Capital Works are as follows:</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Main Contract Issue PQQ</td> <td>May 2017</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Main Contract Issue ITT</td> <td>June 2017</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Main Contract ITT Return</td> <td>July 2017</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Award of Main Contract</td> <td>September 2017</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Main Contract on site</td> <td>October 2017 – May 2017</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Handover and Park re-opening</td> <td>End May 2017</td> </tr> </table> <p>The Conservation Architects presented a RIBA Stage 4 Design Report to the project steering group at a meeting on the 24th April 2017.</p> <p>An overview of Capital works proposals was provided including finishes with regards to buildings.</p> <p>Detail was provided in respect of various design features including Benches, Bins, Path Finish and Lighting. A planting specification has been provided to the gardening team for comment and approval.</p> <p>Examples of fencing and shelters were provided.</p> <p>Consarc are working with Councils AHC department in respect of the play park equipment.</p> <p>At present we are examining the potential to procure the Sculpture by way of an art competition.</p> <p>There was some discussion around positioning of the lights and some further discussion around the positioning of electrical and water services.</p> <p>Recommendations listed in paragraph 2 are presented for Committee consideration.</p>	Main Contract Issue PQQ	May 2017	Main Contract Issue ITT	June 2017	Main Contract ITT Return	July 2017	Award of Main Contract	September 2017	Main Contract on site	October 2017 – May 2017	Handover and Park re-opening	End May 2017
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Award of Main Contract	September 2017												
Main Contract on site	October 2017 – May 2017												
Handover and Park re-opening	End May 2017												

2.0	Recommendations for consideration by Committee:
2.1	To approve the design proposals presented in the RIBA Stage 4 Design Report and agreed at the project steering group meeting on 24/04/2017.
2.2	
2.3	
2.4	
3.0	Appendices- None attached

Report to:	Enterprise Regeneration and Tourism Committee
Date of Meeting:	8 th May 2017
Subject:	Review of Outdoor Recreation legislation relating to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)
Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):	Marie Ward
Contact Officer (Including Job Title):	Catherine Murphy, Heather Wilson Countryside / Rights of Way Officers

Decisions required:	
1.0	Purpose and Background:
1.1	DAERA is undertaking an exercise to look at access legislation which has been in force for a number of years and operates within councils. It is the department's intention to engage as wide a range of organisations which have an interest in access to develop a scoping document to present to their Minister towards the end of 2017. As an initial step, they are seeking to identify the problems/issues with the existing legislation and determine the extent of the problem.
2.0	<p>Key issues: Please refer to the draft response letter to DAERA in appendix 1</p> <p>What does the current legislation not allow you to do – do you feel that there are gaps?</p> <p>The current legislation is weak, difficult to implement and overly complex with many weaknesses. For example the current legislation does not include a statutory duty for all Councils to provide a core path network nor a means to resolve disagreements about the status of a path other than through the Courts. It does not provide clarification on the responsibility of maintenance nor define the powers to enable Councils to keep open PROWs</p> <p>Does the legislation require clarification; to be more specific or simplified in places? The legislation requires clarification for example it does not include a statutory definition of what constitutes a PROW nor clarification on the issues around obstructions and maintenance.</p> <p>Do you use all the provisions in the legislation, if not, why not? NMDDC has yet to make use of the provisions within legislation for access to open countryside. Council has yet to create any public paths by Order due to the difficulties of doing so.</p> <p>Do you fully understand the provisions in the legislation? Council has a good understanding of the current legislation. However</p>

	<p>the Council has needed to seek substantial legal advice due to the complexity and difficulty in interpreting the legislation which is both time consuming and costly.</p> <p>Is there a consistent approach taken by District Councils in implementing this legislation? There has been no consistent approach to the implementation of the Order. Much of this can be attributed to the difficulties of implementing the Order as it currently stands. Consideration should be given in any new legislation for DAERA to enforce the statutory provisions of any new order.</p> <p>Is there a need for guidance material to assist with a common approach across Northern Ireland? Yes there is a clear need for further up-to-date guidance on the implementation of the current Access Order. Guidance will also need to be issues should any new legislation come into being. Consideration should be given to ensuring that councils are obliged to have in place policies and procedures relating to all aspects of dealing with access</p>
3	Recommendations: It is recommended that the draft response letter is approved and submitted to DAERA
4.0	Resource Implications None
5.0	Equality and Good Relations implications None
6.0	Appendices Appendix I: Draft Response to letter from DAERA

Our Ref: TCE/GC/62

XX May 2017

Mr Ken Bradley
Regulatory and Natural Resources
Policy Division
Klondyke Buildings
Gasworks Business Park
Cromac Avenue
Belfast
BT7 2JA

Dear Ken,

Re: Review of Outdoor Recreation legislation relating to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)

I refer to your letter of the 28 March 2017.

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council places great importance on the implementation of the Access to the Countryside (NI) Order 1983, continuing the work that both legacy councils of Down District Council and Newry and Mourne District Council have started.

To date Newry, Mourne and Down have asserted 125 public rights of way with the addition of 5 public rights of way in the Ballyward area, previously under the control of Banbridge District Council. A number of public path creations have been completed, along with the provision of other outdoor recreation facilities such as mountain bike trails and the development of a Greenway linking Newry and Carlingford.

Newry Mourne and Down District Council have placed considerable importance on the development of outdoor recreation within the district for a number of reasons:-

- Tourism is seen as a key driver in the development of the economy of the District with particular emphasis given to outdoor recreation as an attractor
- The development of Outdoor Recreation makes best use of the outstanding natural resources located within the District

Much of the access developed within the district has been achieved through the assertion of public rights of way. Whilst we have been successful at this it has proved to be time consuming and difficult with many weaknesses within the current legislation.

In the implementation of the Access Order we have found that there is little appreciation among landowners, the legal profession and even at times the Courts of the legal framework underlying the council's duty to assert, protect and record PROWs, the conditions under which the public acquire such rights and the enduring nature of those rights once they have been established. At the present time there is a lack of case law and a lack of legal expertise in rights of way issues within the Province.

Under the current Access Order councils have no power to substitute or exchange the duty to assert for another course of action (based on extraneous consideration such as financial or resource implications or consideration of whether an alternative route exists). This needs to be made much clearer in any proposed new legislation.

Additionally once a public right of way has been created the public right cannot be lost and can only be extinguished by statute or by an extinguishment order-again this needs to be made clearer in any new legislation. There is also current uncertainty as to whether there is a hierarchy of legislation, for example is the council under a legal duty to protect rate payers monies? Any new legislation needs to avoid this doubt.

All aspects relating to the development of access should be consolidated into one piece of legislation. Currently public rights of way are dealt with under the Access Order but the development of permissive paths falls under the Recreation and Youth Services (NI) Order 1986 whilst the power to enter land falls under the Local Government Act (NI) 1972.

What does the current legislation not allow you to do – do you feel there are gaps?

1. Any new legislation should enable councils clearly to prioritise which public rights of way they may wish to investigate. Whilst this can be done under current legislation there is potential for individuals to challenge this given the duty under Article 3 of the Order.
2. Consideration should be given within any new legislation that councils should have a statutory duty to provide a core path network within each council area.
3. It is currently very unclear what powers councils have within Northern Ireland to remove obstructions such as barbed wire across a path. Under the English 1980 Highways Act there are specific powers to prosecute for wilful obstruction, the power to require the removal of barbed wire and to require landowners to cut or remove trees.

4. There are no set procedures for the assertion of public rights of way nor any prescribed format for an assertion statement. This gives rise to uncertainty and a lack of a unified approach by all councils. Set procedures should be put in place.
5. There are no statutory criteria for deciding whether a path is a public right of way or not. Any new legislation should address this.
6. Unless a declaration has been sought through the courts there is no certainty with an asserted public right of way-they are open to challenge at any time. Court action is both costly and time consuming. Any new legislation should address this.
7. There is no way of resolving disagreements about the status of a path other than through the courts. A solution to this would be to set up an arbitration panel similar to that of the Planning Appeals Commission. Unlike court proceedings where the loser may end up paying all costs, through arbitration all sides would pay their own costs. A decision could be made either through a formal inquiry or by written representation.
8. Under current legislation it would appear that no-one has responsibility for the maintenance of public rights of way. Whilst councils have a discretionary power to maintain, this has led to a situation where some Councils do maintain and other do not. It would make sense for this responsibility to be given to district councils provided sufficient funding was made available. This would greatly simplify the issue with minimum standards set for each particular category of path.
9. When opening up and developing public rights of way, councils have no automatic right of entry onto land adjacent to the right of way. It is also unclear whether or not councils have the authority to maintain a public right of way without the consent of the landowner.
10. More specific powers are required to enable district councils to keep open public rights of way. Under the Access Order the council may institute 'proceedings in its own name' but there are no specific powers for enforcement. More clearly defined powers would also make it easier for landowners to determine what is/is not an offence.
11. There are no powers under the existing Order to prevent landowners removing the boundaries of a public right of way.
12. There are no specific powers available to allow district councils to improve public rights of way.
13. Whilst there are powers to authorise the erection of stiles and gates this can only be done in the interests of farming and agriculture. This power should be extended to allow for the erection of gates to prevent motorised vehicles using a foot path or bridle way (other than a landowner) or to prevent anti-social behaviour.
14. Consideration should be given to giving councils powers to regulate vehicular traffic on carriage ways or introduce a category of restricted by-way for conservation and other purposes.
15. There is currently no specific power to divert public rights of way close to or through protected areas eg ASSI's.
16. Current powers to enter land to investigate alleged public rights of way fall under the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972-this should be a specific power in any new access legislation.

17. Consideration should be given for the specific provision of access to the Northern Ireland coastline.

Does the legislation require clarification; to be more specific or simplified in places?

1. Under the current Access Order there is no statutory definition of what constitutes a public right of way. This creates uncertainty.
2. The term 'public path' is the main term used in the Access Order and not public right of way-considerable interpretation of the Order is required to determine that 'public path' also includes 'public right of way'. This should be simplified to avoid confusion.
3. Urban rights of way should be excluded from the Access Order and become the responsibility of the Transport NI.
4. As previously noted the issues around obstructions and maintenance require simplification and to be made more specific.
5. The rights of cyclists need to be made much clearer.
6. Clarification on whether public rights of way can be asserted over Crown land is required. For security reasons Ministry of Defence land is the only area that should be exempt without agreement.

Do you use all the provisions in the legislation, if not, why not?

1. Newry, Mourne and Down District Council have yet to made use of the provisions within the Order for access to open countryside. Attempts were made some years ago to enter into an access agreement with one of the Mourne Trustee groups but unfortunately due to the lack of formal constitution of the group concerned it was not possible for the council to legally continue. The wider issue regarding the how these groups are set up needs to be resolved before this can be considered in future.
2. Council has yet to formally map areas of open country within the District due to potential objections that could be raised by landowners and it is not seen as a priority area of work.
3. Council has yet to create any public paths by order due to the difficulties of doing so and the potentially negative publicity that it could generate. As a council it is preferred that any access is achieved through agreement with landowners, however this provision should be retained within any new legislation.

Do you fully understand the provisions in the legislation?

1. Given that both legacy councils have managed to assert a substantial number of public rights of way we have made best use of the legislation and have a good understanding of the current legislation. However in gaining this understanding the council has needed to seek substantial legal advice due to the complexity and difficulty in interpreting the legislation which is both time consuming and costly.

Is there a consistent approach taken by District Councils in implementing this legislation?

1. There has been no consistent approach to the implementation of the Order-some councils have very much 'run' with the Order and tried to implement it despite its inherent weaknesses whilst other councils have ignored it to a very large extent. Much of this can be attributed to the difficulties of implementing the Order as it currently stands. Many councils have also treated the Order as an 'enabling' piece of legislation despite the duty under Article 3. Consideration should be given in any new legislation for DEARA to enforce the statutory provisions of any new order.

Is there a need for guidance material to assist with a common approach across Northern Ireland?

1. Yes there is a clear need for further up-to-date guidance on the implementation of the current Access Order, particularly as any new legislation will be some time away. The 'Red Book' is now outdated. There is also a need for legal training for Countryside/Access Officers on a more regular basis. Guidance will also need to be issued should any new legislation come into being.
2. Consideration should be given under any new legislation to ensuring that councils are obliged to have in place policies and procedures relating to all aspects of dealing with access including maintenance of any asserted public rights of way. As noted before the level of maintenance should be consistent throughout all Councils with examples of best practice set out.

Wider Issues to be considered

Public liability

Public liability is also a key issue with landowners in particular, despite the fact that there is little evidence of actual claims being made. However the perception of a 'claims culture' is one factor deterring landowners from agreeing to access across private land and so it is important that this issue is also reviewed. There is a case to be made for the provision of public liability insurance cover by councils for all landowners of public rights of way as would usually be the case through permissive paths agreements. This may require further resources to be made from central government.

Access element to Agri-environment schemes

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council would wish to encourage enhanced access to walking/cycling/horse riding routes within Northern Ireland. One way to encourage landowners to cooperate would be to introduce an access element to future agri-environment schemes. This would be of great benefit by providing a positive incentive for landowners to provide access where currently little exists. The provision of access should not be to the detriment of agri-environment payments to a landowner where access is for the public good- for example single farm payments should not be reduced

as a result of landowners entering into permissive path agreements or dedicating public rights of way.

The impact of this issue has wider effects as outdoor recreation is of significant value to rural economic development.

Countryside Officers have worked hard to develop relationships with landowners around the management of access but, as touched on above, the absence of significant incentives to new access have confined much of our effort to remedial action on existing routes. We hope that the reinstatement of an access element to the agri-environment schemes can be given favourable consideration.

In conclusion, the current Access to the Countryside (NI) Order is weak, difficult to implement and overly complex and in the opinion of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, should as a priority be replaced.

Yours sincerely,

Agenda Item:	
Report to:	Enterprise Regeneration and Tourism Committee
Subject:	Superfast and Rural Broadband Update
Date:	Monday 15 th May 2017
Reporting Officer:	Marie Ward, Director Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism
Contact Officer:	Martin Patterson, Enterprise Development Officer

Decisions Required

For consideration

1.0 Purpose and Background

Broadband improvement is one of the key strategic priorities for Newry, Mourne and Down District Council as detailed in the Councils Corporate Plan. It is also detailed in a number of high level Government strategies and in particular on a local level in our Enterprise, Regeneration and Investment Strategy and Local Rural Development Strategy.

A number of interventions have taken place in the recent past to improve broadband which have included the 'Broadband Connection Voucher Scheme' and the 'Rural Broadband Fund' and these have benefitted businesses and organisations in our Council district. The Council performed well in terms of uptake of vouchers with more than 25 businesses availing of high level capital installation. We also organised 4 broadband workshops in Crossmaglen, Newry, Downpatrick and Ballynahinch which included Department and BT senior representatives. In addition we have been lobbying with all relevant providers on behalf of businesses, community and sporting organisations as well as individual requests to prioritise broadband provision in various locations.

Three additional programmes of funding are now available within our district which should be availed of, namely; 'Superfast Broadband' funding and the 'NI Better Broadband Scheme', administered by the Department for the Economy and Rural Development Programme, administered by the Mourne, Gullion and Lecale Local Action Group (LAG).

2.0 Key Issues

Department for the Economy

Superfast Broadband

The Council responded to the Departments consultation exercise in December 2016 on The Superfast Rollout Programme which had additional funding made available (£4 million). It will lay new fibre optic telephone lines to cabinets, and in some cases to premises, in many areas across Northern Ireland including Newry, Mourne and Down District. This will improve telecommunications infrastructure provided through telephone lines. Under the terms of current contracts with BT further funding has enabled to extend coverage in the intervention area. The BT modelling has focussed on producing the optimal value for money coverage and has resulted in a mix of new

	<p>postcodes that were not previously included and further premises within existing postcodes. There is a wide coverage in the district and it covers all electoral areas. Timeframe for capital works implementation is January to March 2018 and roll out of service thereafter.</p> <p><u>NI Better Broadband Scheme</u></p> <p>The Northern Ireland Better Broadband Scheme is a national scheme, run in partnership with the Department for the Economy, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, and registered retail service providers. It is jointly managed by Department for the Economy and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.</p> <p>It aims to provide access to a subsidised broadband installation to homes and businesses that are unable to access a broadband service with a download speed of at least 2 Mb per second and who will not benefit from the superfast broadband roll out. Applications are available from the link below.</p> <p>http://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/northern-ireland-better-broadband-scheme</p> <p>Priority 6 of the Rural Development Programme 2014 - 2020 - Rural Broadband Scheme</p> <p>This scheme will provide financial support to fill the gap for rural dwellers who cannot avail of broadband and will help address the very rural 'not spots' that are not within the scope of any other government initiatives. Funding will be limited to small broadband infrastructure schemes that will involve innovative community led solutions for local access. It is proposed in the first instance to commission research which will identify the problem rural areas and options available to the LAG to redress them.</p> <p>The objectives of this research would be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To analyse the Newry, Mourne and Down District area with regards to internet connectivity (Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line (ASDL), Broadband and Fibre) with particular reference to the Department of Economy's Annex B postcodes within Newry, Mourne and Down district which are not earmarked for improvement. • To collate data from both primary and secondary research (OFCOM) and produce a series of heat maps highlighting the areas with good coverage and broadband blackspots with below average speeds in the district. • To engage with local communities in South Armagh, Lecale and the Mourne areas that could avail of a Community Broadband solution utilising MGL funding.
3.0	<p>Recommendations</p> <p>(a) Newry, Mourne and Down District Council support the Department for the Economy implementation of the additional 'superfast broadband' funding.</p> <p>(b) Newry, Mourne and Down District Council submit an application to the Rural Development Programme via the Mourne, Gullion and Lecale Local Action Group (LAG) for funding to commission research. This will identify the additional problem areas and options available to the LAG to redress them.</p>

4.0	Resource Implications £1,666 (25% of total project costs) available in the economic development budget (seeking rural development match funding of £5,000 equating to 75% of total project costs) for the development of a feasibility study.
5.0	Equality and Good Relations implications This programme has an open door policy to all applicants and meets all of the criteria.
6.0	Appendices Information paper on Superfast and Rural Broadband

NI Superfast Rollout Programme Clarification

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council would like to thank you for the opportunity in clarifying the intervention areas which do not have Next Generation Access (NGA) broadband infrastructure delivering at least 30Mbps, or where there are no plans to provide such infrastructure over the next three years.

As detailed and discussed previously with the Department for the Economy officials, our Council District has many locations where 'Next Generation Access (NGA; areas which do not have broadband infrastructure delivering at least 30Mbps, known as 'white areas').

While the draft paper you have circulated is comprehensive, I would comment as follows and ask that you include them in your final proposals;

1. Our Councils Enterprise, Regeneration and Investment and Tourism Strategies have highlighted that poor connectivity in all areas of our District (both urban and rural) is a major issue in terms of promoting economic development, tourism and inward investment opportunities (strategy attached for reference). The lack of superfast broadband without doubt hinders the process of job creation and investment.
2. The intervention postcodes you have identified in your draft proposals, while comprehensive and accurate, do not meet the required need. It would be more prudent to state that our entire District is lacking in the required infrastructure to cope with demand. Our District, including all of our urban and rural areas, should be targeted in the future funding which becomes available.
3. The majority of our 7,500 SME's are based in rural areas. This sector should be targeted in a focused approach and give all eligible businesses the opportunity to receive or improve their connectivity.
4. Our Council organised six public 'connectivity' workshops across the District in 2015/16 and the entire Council area was affected by lack of service provision.
5. Our Council District has a high number of business parks and these should be targeted to ensure that the most up to date infrastructure is in place.
6. Our Council District has taken up a substantial amount of 'connection vouchers' and we are investigating 'aerial satellite' opportunities, however this is very much a piecemeal approach and does not address the major lack of connectivity infrastructure. The Department should take a more strategic approach to the implementation of superfast broadband implementation.
7. The Local Action Group responsible for the implementation of Priority 6 of the Rural Development Programme will be undertaking a feasibility study to investigate the opportunities that exist to impact on rural broadband provisions with a view to working towards a capital project. The LAG's budget is limited,

however in working closely with a range of agencies etc greater benefits may provide more significant opportunities.

8. Our new Council IT Strategy was agreed in October 2016. We have since been establishing the 'IT Transformation Programme', to deliver the Strategy. The Programme is a critical initiative which presents a host of opportunities to improve how we work together to deliver our services. This specifically looks at all activity surrounding superfast broadband and wifi internally and externally.

In conclusion, we welcome the opportunity to access additional funding for superfast broadband in our District and will assist in delivering this initiative when it is due to roll out.

Martin Patterson

Enterprise Development Officer

Comhairle Ceantair an Iúir, Mhúrn agus an Dúin

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Agenda Item:	[This is the number the item will be given]
Report to:	Enterprise Regeneration and Tourism Committee
Subject:	Downpatrick Hotel
Date:	Monday 8 May 2017
Reporting Officer:	Marie Ward, Director Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism
Contact Officer:	Jonathan McGilly, Assistant Director Enterprise, Employment and Regeneration

Decisions Required:-

To note/agree etc the contents of the report and approve recommendations at Section 3.

1.0 Purpose and Background:

Following the completion of a previously completed Accommodation Survey for Downpatrick, one of the key recommendations to emerge from it was the need for more available bed spaces in the town. Having worked closely with Tourism Northern Ireland and Invest Northern Ireland on this original survey, it was agreed Council would then commission a Feasibility Study/Business Case to look at options for a proposed Hotel in Downpatrick.

In late 2016 Council appointed consultants Peter Quinn Consulting to undertake this commission. To date, they have undertaken the required desktop research and carried out extensive consultations with numerous agencies and individuals.

2.0 Key Issues:

The report is now complete and the main conclusions are that:-

2.1 Evidence shows that visitors to Downpatrick are largely day trippers due to the absence of adequate accommodation to meet needs of bus tours. A hotel provision in Downpatrick would provide the opportunity to package overnight stays in the town and offer same to the ready market of 800 coach tour visits annually.

2.2 A hotel of at least 3 star quality is required to capture this market and hotel needs to offer 50+ bedrooms.

2.3 There is an obvious market failure in the area given there is currently no provision of hotel accommodation of this scale in or near the town. This would support a public sector interest in support of hotel provision.

2.4 The additional facilities in the final hotel proposal ie Conference Centre, wedding provision and boutique hotel etc will depend on site and the operations business model however a model which would cater for local business also would enhance viability. It is however important to note that there is other provision of accommodation, wedding facilities etc in the area so if there is a public interaction it should not result in displacement.

2.5 The hotel should be located within a 1.5 mile radius of the town with suitable infrastructure, access and parking.

2.6 Since commissioning this work, Council Officials have facilitated meetings with potential investors to include pre planning application discussions.

3.0	Recommendations: 3.1 Council approves the report and the key findings. 3.2 Council continues to liaise with potential developers within the parameters of the report's findings and recommendations. 3.3 Report back to Committee in two months on progress.
4.0	Resource Implications: No financial implications at this stage.
5.0	Equality and Good Relations Implications: In delivery of the scheme, the Council and its Consultants are fully mindful of the Section 75 legislation.
6.0	Appendices: Full report attached.

1.0 INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Downpatrick is one of Ireland's most ancient and historic towns. It dates back to early Christianity, some fifteen centuries ago and is renowned for its links to St. Patrick. It is believed that Downpatrick is where St. Patrick landed in 432 A.D. (though there is some dispute on this issue) and where he carried out most of his early Christian work. He is buried at Down Cathedral.
- 1.2 Downpatrick Town is located in the South Eastern corner of Northern Ireland, about 21 miles South of Belfast, 12 miles North-East of Newcastle, 50 miles East of Armagh and approximately 32 miles from the border with the Republic of Ireland. It hosted the headquarters of the former Down District Council and was that area's main town. Downpatrick's catchment area is the North-East of Ireland, with the main linking thoroughfares being the A7 to Belfast (through Saintfield), the A25 to Newry (via Castlewellan) and the B2 to Ballynahinch. The following map shows the location of Downpatrick (bottom right) in a Northern Ireland context.



- 1.3 Given its connections to Ireland's patron saint, Downpatrick holds considerable attraction for tourists who visit Northern Ireland and for those who come through the Republic of Ireland, or are from that part of the Island of Ireland. Already, Downpatrick secures a reasonable influx of tourists to its various attractions, even though they are not marketed in a coordinated and collaborative fashion; as a result

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it fails to capitalise on such footfall. One of the main reasons suggested as an explanation for that is the lack of a reasonably sized, quality hotel in the area.

1.4 The development of an hotel in Downpatrick has been muted for some considerable time within the area; successive development plans, master plans, tourism development plans for Downpatrick all appear to point to the need to develop a hotel of some description (with most such suggestions not being prescriptive). Despite these numerous push factors, a hotel of the size and quality, which might have been anticipated has never materialised.

1.5 The following represents the main recent reports/strategic documents where the development of a hotel in Downpatrick was recommended:

- Downpatrick - Town Centre Master Plan (July 2010 & February 2011): It identified the need for a Gateway Hotel to be developed on the current Down High School site, once the School had been relocated, as a high priority.
- St. Patrick – Tourism Development Plan (November 2011): That plan referred to the need for a “reasonable quality substantial tourism hotel in the town” although that was not defined in terms of scale.
- Destinations Mourne Mountains, Ring of Gullion & Strangford Lough: Tourist Accommodation Study (Sept 2015): It recommended that a hotel should be developed (with a 3-star Mid-Market hotel being suggested)
- St. Patrick’s Signature Project Scoping Study (2014: Joint commission with Armagh & Down District Councils): There is a reference in that study to the development of a ‘well-being’ hotel in Downpatrick.

In reality, the absence of an appropriately sized hotel has regularly been suggested as a priority for this town and as a high priority project for the expansion of the area’s tourism attraction.

1.6 The most recent plans for the development of a 40-bedroom boutique hotel in Church Street¹ in the town, were scrapped when the planning service deemed the selected site to represent a flood risk and because of its proximity to a historical landmark ‘the Mound of Down’.

1.7 As a direct consequence of the many references to the need for a Hotel in Downpatrick (and to the often suggested beneficial economic and social impacts that a hotel could have for this part of the region), Newry, Mourne & Down District Council has commissioned a Feasibility Study, incorporating an Assessment of the Need and Demand for such a hotel in Downpatrick. Furthermore, if that report were

¹ 24th august 2016, Down Recorder

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to conclude positively on that issue, the Council has indicated a willingness to extend its support for any such project to include an Expression of Interest procedure (designed to unearth potential private operators) and to incorporate the Preparation of a Full Business Plan for submission to potential funding entities, in order to bring any reasonably positive proposal to fruition. This document represents the first stage of that process – the feasibility study.

But the Council also recognises that any potential investor or developer will consider it necessary to undertake his/her/its own private analysis of the feasibility and potential profitability of such a project.

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2.0 STRATEGIC REVIEW

2.1 A review of the main relevant documents, policies and strategies was undertaken as part of the research into whether there now exists a need and a demand for a Hotel in Downpatrick. The following section provides a summarised analysis of the project's congruence with the policies and objectives of the various Departmental Strategies, the Northern Ireland Executive's 'Programme for Government' and other relevant strategies. The following table summarises the key strategic documents/policies which were reviewed. A more detailed description of the policies, and this project's strategic fit/congruence with them, is provided in Appendix 1 to this report.

Data relating to six separate relevant strategies are set out in tabular form in the following pages. In each of the six strategies reviewed, there is enough evidence to suggest that there is a strategic need for such an investment, and to support the case for further positive analysis of the economic, social and financial value of such a project. Cumulatively, they represent a very strong case for further consideration of such a project.

The case indicated in the documents analysed in the table below represents the underpinning argument for the subsequent analysis of the potential of such a project.

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Strategic Document	Policy Context	Congruence with proposal
NI Programme for Government 2011-2015	<p>The NI Programme for government 2011-2015 includes the following strategic priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing a Sustainable Economy and Investing in the Future (<i>e.g. enhanced economic infrastructure</i>) • Creating Opportunities, Tackling Disadvantage and Improving Health and Wellbeing (<i>e.g. less deprived communities</i>) • Protecting Our People, the Environment and Creating Safer Communities (<i>e.g. preserving and improving the built and natural environment</i>) • Building a Strong and Shared Community (<i>e.g. unlocking the potential of the culture, arts and leisure sectors</i>) 	<p>Under these four strategic priorities, potential investment in the development of a hotel in Downpatrick should provide an opportunity to create economic prosperity in an area of great social and economic disadvantage, create jobs, attract visitors to the area, and provide the stimulus for further regeneration in the surrounding area.</p>
Draft Programme for Government 2016-2021 (Northern Ireland)	<p>The Programme for Government for the period 2016-2021 is still in draft form. However, the draft Framework contains 14 strategic outcomes which, taken together, sets a clear direction of policy which would enable continuous improvement on the essential components of societal well-being. They touch on every aspect of government, including the attainment of good health and health education, economic success and confident and peaceful communities.</p> <p>The suggested outcomes are supported by 42 indicators which are clear statements for change. Each indicator is accompanied by a measure largely derived from existing statistics.</p>	<p>The Executive recognises the importance of Tourism to the Economy of Northern Ireland under a number of anticipated outcomes or indicators, as follows:</p> <p>Outcome 12 (<i>We have created a place where people want to live and work, to visit and invest</i>);</p> <p>Indicator 27 (Improve Cultural Participation) and Indicator 30 (Improve our attractiveness as a destination) Under the latter, the Draft PfG indicates: <i>"As one of our key service sectors and economic pillars, the tourism and hospitality industry offers one of the best opportunities for Northern Ireland to strengthen its economy. There is huge growth potential in our tourism and hospitality industry"</i>.</p>

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Northern Ireland Economic Strategy, DETI	<p>The Economic Strategy states:</p> <p>‘It is also important to develop the potential of other sectors that have and will continue to make important contributions to the development of the NI economy. They include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative Industries • Tourism • Social Economy 	The proposed investment would clearly address the second of those headings directly and should also add some value to the third heading too.
Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland, 2020 NITB	<p>The vision articulated within the draft strategy is that:</p> <p>“Northern Ireland has set its sights high. We will double the income we earn from tourism by 2020. We will work together to grow tourism for the benefit of all.”</p> <p>This will be achieved by:</p> <p>increasing visitors from 3.2 million to 4.5 million by 2020; increasing earnings from tourism from £536 million* to £1 billion by 2020; progressively accelerating spend by visitors targeting specific markets and market segments; supporting indigenous high quality businesses to grow; and being visitor inspired in all our actions</p>	As Downpatrick is commencing from a vastly inadequate accommodation base and tourism infrastructure, the development of a Hotel in the area would significantly contribute towards achieving the targets established for the growth of tourism in that part of NI, in particular through enhancing the quality of the experience visitors to NI could enjoy.
Newry, Mourne & Down District Council Economic Regeneration & Investment Strategy (2015-2020)	<p>The mission statement contained within the document indicates that</p> <p>“Newry, Mourne and Down region will be recognised as a vibrant, dynamic and connected region of enterprise and economic growth; a place of sustainable natural beauty and a premier tourist destination encompassing excellence in culture and arts and enabling and creating opportunities for all”.</p> <p><i>(continued overleaf)</i></p> <p>The Strategy is developed around five themes:</p>	<p>In the chairman’s address it is stated that “We have a strong vision for Newry, Mourne and Down District as a vibrant, dynamic and connected region for investment, tourism and culture”. Tourism is therefore a central plank of the strategy for economic regeneration and investment across the region.</p> <p><i>(continued overleaf)</i></p> <p>The priorities connected to the Tourism theme are:</p>

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	<p>1 Economic Development 2 Tourism Development, Marketing, Promotion and Events 3 Urban Development and Regeneration 4 Rural Development and Regeneration 5 Arts, Culture and Heritage</p>	<p>To become the destination of choice in NI To become NI's premier outdoor/ adventure destination To become one of NI's finest events destinations Downpatrick is specifically mentioned in the report as a key principal town that is strategically located as a gateway between Northern Ireland and the South of Ireland.</p>
<p>Newry, Mourne & Down District Council Tourist Accommodation Scoping Study (Sept 2015)</p>	<p>ASM Horwarth undertook an Accommodation Study across the Newry, Mourne and Down District Council areas in September 2015. Core Findings were: 70% of visitors were day trippers; An opportunity exists to increase overnight stays. Clearly those findings suggest that there is currently a 'gap' in the market in relation to facilities for visitors/potential visitors.</p>	<p>The accommodation study recognised the importance of the following in relation to Downpatrick: There is a strong Christian Heritage in Downpatrick, which could be harnessed by the development of a mid-market (3 star) full service hotel of circa 60/70 bedrooms in Downpatrick with the possibility of spa facilities to add a "wellness" element to the offer; A mid-market hotel in Downpatrick is one of the suggested actions arising from this study.</p>

3.0 THE TOURISM INDUSTRY IN IRELAND AND ITS IMPORTANCE

Overview of Tourism in Northern Ireland

3.1 According to statistic released by NISRA, Tourism in Northern Ireland currently generates 5.2% of NI's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), generates revenue of £723 million, sustains 43,000 jobs and attracts 4.1 million visitors; those figures indicate huge value to the economy. The aim is to double tourism's contribution to that economy by 2020 and such a target means generating £1 billion in total revenue, creating an additional 10,000 new jobs and attracting 4.5 million visitors.

3.1.1 Total visitors (from out-of-state plus domestic) spent almost three quarters of a billion pounds in NI in 2013 – an increase of £33 million on 2012.

3.1.2 Other tourism statistics released are as follows:

- During 2013 4.1 million overnight trips were taken within Northern Ireland (NI) by NI residents and visitors from outside NI (Republic of Ireland, Great Britain and overseas). Associated spend was almost three quarters of a billion pounds (up £34m on 2012);
- During January-June 2014, NI residents and visitors from outside NI took two million overnight trips in NI, an increase of 5% on Jan-June 2013. Expenditure arising from those trips is estimated at £348m, 10% higher than the Jan-June 2013 spend;
- NI residents took over one million overnight trips in NI during the first half of 2014, up 9% on Jan-June 2013. Visitors from outside NI took 973,000 overnight trips in NI, a 1% increase compared with the first half of 2013;
- Holiday trips taken in NI during Jan-June 2014 increased by 30% on the same period in 2013 to reach almost one million;
- During Jan-June 2014 over one million rooms were sold in NI hotels, B&Bs, guesthouses and guest accommodation, a 4% increase compared with the first half of 2013;
- At June 2014, tourism and leisure jobs accounted for 8% (55,000) of all employee jobs in NI. The volume of jobs has increased by 3% since Q2 2011 (53,500);

Table 2.1, overleaf, shows how NI compares to the UK as a whole and its performance relative to the other UK nations.

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	Total UK		England		Scotland		Wales		Northern Ireland	
	Absolute	Absolute	Relative % UK total	Absolute	Relative % UK total	Absolute	Relative % UK total	Absolute	Relative % UK total	
	£bn	£bn	£bn	£bn	£bn	£bn	£bn	£bn	£bn	
Visitor Exports (inbound = travel spending + fares)	22.3	25.5	72.6%	5.5	15.8%	3.3	9.5%	0.7	2.1%	
Personal Travel & Tourism (domestic+outbound)	113.1	94.9	84.0%	9.9	8.8%	5.4	4.8%	2.8	2.5%	
Business Travel (domestic +outbound)	26.3	22.1	83.7%	3.2	12.0%	1.0	3.9%	0.1	0.4%	
Government Expenditures (individual + collective)	10.9	7.9	72.7%	1.5	13.6%	0.9	8.3%	0.6	5.3%	
Capital Investment	23.0	19.5	84.5%	2.1	9.2%	0.9	3.7%	0.6	2.6%	
Travel & Tourism Demand	195.6	169.5	81.5%	22.2	10.7%	11.6	5.6%	4.8	2.3%	
Outbound tourism spending (fares + travel)	33.5	33.8	79.1%	4.4	10.3%	3.0	7.1%	1.5	3.5%	
Direct industry contribution to GDP	58.0	48.3	83.9%	5.4	9.4%	3.1	5.4%	0.7	1.3%	
Tourism economy contribution to GDP	126.9	106.0	84.1%	11.6	9.2%	6.9	5.4%	1.6	1.3%	
Total contribution to GDP	160.5	134.1	84.1%	14.7	9.2%	8.7	5.4%	2.0	1.3%	
Direct industry employment (000s jobs)	1,748	1,436	82.2%	167	9.6%	114	6.5%	31	1.8%	
Tourism economy employment (000s jobs)	3,116	2,575	82.6%	292	9.4%	206	6.6%	43	1.4%	
Total employment (000s jobs)	3,787	3,136	82.9%	354	9.4%	242	6.4%	52	1.4%	

Source: Oxford Economics

Table 2.1 highlights the achievement gap between tourism as a sector in Northern Ireland and its performance in other parts of the UK. There are obvious reasons

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which contributed to the relative poor tourism performance, not least the impact of 30+ years of community conflict. However, the following aspects are worth highlighting:

- Northern Ireland's relative percentage of UK total visitor spend at 2.1% compared to 9.5% for Wales and 15.8% in Scotland;
- NI direct tourism industry's contribution to GDP at 1.3% compared to Wales at 5.4% and Scotland at 9.2%
- NI tourism economy's employment at 43,000 jobs (1.4% of total UK) compared to Wales 206,000 jobs (6.6% of UK total) and Scotland at 292,000 jobs or 9.4% of UK total

In summary if Northern Ireland was to close the gap between its tourism performance and that for Wales or Scotland, significant jobs and investment opportunities would be created in the local economy.

Overview of Tourism Industry in Republic of Ireland

- 3.2** The Department of Transport, Sport & Tourism in the Republic of Ireland clearly indicates that 'Tourism' is one of Ireland's most important economic sectors and has significant potential to play a further role in Ireland's economic renewal. In 2015, it was calculated that tourism was responsible for overseas earnings of €4.208 billion (excluding carrier receipts – airfares and ferry costs). Combining the data from the domestic market and international visitors, total tourism revenue for the economy in 2015 was estimated to be €7 billion.
- 3.2.1** The tourism sector is said to support approximately 143,500 jobs in the accommodation and food sector alone in the Republic of Ireland and overall employment in tourism is estimated to be in the region of 205,000.
- 3.2.2** Data from the Central Statistics Office in Dublin for 2015 show that overall visits to Ireland in 2015 rose by 13.7% (8.645 million trips). Core tourism visits grew strongly with holiday trips up 20.4% and business trips up 12.3%. Visits to friends and relatives in Ireland rose by 4%. Spending by visitors to Ireland also increased in 2015, with total tourism and travel earnings from overseas visitors (incl. fares) grew by 17.3% to €5.530 billion.
- 3.3** From the above summarised, it is very clear that Tourism is a very important feature of and factor in the Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland's economies and it is also significant that the N.I. Government feels that there is considerable potential to expand the Northern Ireland tourism market to a billion pound industry by 2020.

4.0 ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT PROVISION

- 4.1 As part of the overall assessment of the need and demand for a hotel in Downpatrick, this section provides a socio-economic overview of Downpatrick and an assessment of the current provision from the perspective of tourism product offerings, including the accommodation provision, in the area.

Socio-Economic Context

- 4.2.1 Downpatrick is located in the newly formed District Council of Newry, Mourne & Down District Council area. Downpatrick is categorised (in statistical terms) as a medium settlement (i.e. towns with between 10,000 and 18,000 people). According to the census data held by NISRA, the Downpatrick settlement had a population of 10,737 in 2008. The following map delineates the area in question:



- 4.2.2 The population of the Downpatrick settlement according to NISRA has grown 4% from 2001 to 2008; the population for settlement has not been updated since 2008.
- 4.2.3 The Neighbourhood Renewal area (which covers over 60% of the Downpatrick settlement and includes the main estates: Flying Horse, Model, New Model, Kennedy Square, Marian Park, Meadowlands, Church Street, Mount Crescent and much of the town centre. Statistics available to 2011 on Downpatrick NRA suggests that

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between 2001 and 2011 the growth rate in the area was a staggering 17% indicating that today the entire Downpatrick Settlement has a population exceeding 11,000 people.

Demographic Profile

The demographic profile of Downpatrick (compared to its council area and Northern Ireland) is summarised in the following table. The most notable fact is that the area has a very young and dependant population with 24% under the age of 16 (compared to 21% for NI and 23% for the Council area).

	Newry, Mourne & Down District Council area		NI		Downpatrick NRA	
Age Bands						
0-15	39,078	22.78%	379,323	20.95%	1465	24.22%
16-39	55,789	32.52%	593,832	32.79%	2131	35.23%
40-64	53,718	31.32%	573,988	31.70%	1670	27.61%
65-84	20,270	11.82%	232,324	12.83%	782*	12.93%
85+	2,678	1.56%	31,396	1.73%	0	0.00%
Overall	171,533	100%	1,810,863	100.00%	6048	100.00%

* This figure includes those over 85

Economic Deprivation

Deprivation analysis are available from NISRA as low as Output Areas (OAs) which provide a deduction on the level of economic deprivation that exists across Northern Ireland. There are 5,022 OAs that cover Northern Ireland. A rank of 1 indicates the most relatively deprived area in Northern Ireland.

Importance of Tourism in Newry, Mourne & Down District

- 4.3** Tourism is a very important industry in the Newry, Mourne and Down District, hosting an estimated 404,000 overnight trips, with total expenditure of £47.7 million in 2015 according to statistics published by NISRA (see the statistics in the table overleaf). In absolute terms, the district has the third highest level of overnight stays in Northern Ireland (behind Belfast & Causeway Coast & Glens) but has only the fifth highest level of expenditure by such visitors, which suggests that opportunities are currently being missed. Interestingly, the Newry, Mourne and Down District had the lowest expenditure per overnight stay at £118 across all districts in Northern Ireland and it was also lowest in terms of the number of nights spent per overnight stay.

- 4.3.1** Therefore, there is clearly an issue with the tourist product offering (which would appear to attract mainly day trippers who do not spend much), with the type of visitor or with the fact that the quality and range of accommodation available in the region is a contributory factor to the low spending pattern. There could be a multitude of reasons why the district is not capitalising on the high visitor numbers, but what it is clear that the district's tourism performance is significantly under-achieving by comparison with the rest of Northern Ireland.

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Estimated Overnight Trips, Nights and Expenditure by Local Government District, 2015								
	Overnight Trips		Nights		Expenditure		£ per Overnight Stay	Average Duration of Stay
	Number	% of NI	Number	% of NI	£	% of NI	£	Days
Antrim & Newtownabbey	204,290	4%	672,902	4%	34,164,529	4%	167.24	3.29
Ards & North Down	376,755	8%	1,397,895	9%	51,013,302	7%	135.4	3.71
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	149,449	3%	562,866	4%	22,476,581	3%	150.4	3.77
Belfast	1,361,193	29%	4,237,733	27%	278,034,119	37%	204.26	3.11
Causeway Coast & Glens	911,388	20%	3,141,914	20%	136,770,965	18%	150.07	3.45
Derry City & Strabane	223,172	5%	889,416	6%	42,502,028	6%	190.45	3.99
Fermanagh & Omagh	341,051	7%	1,136,816	7%	54,585,277	7%	160.05	3.33
Lisburn & Castlereagh	130,924	3%	714,336	5%	24,910,212	3%	190.26	5.46
Mid & East Antrim	382,224	8%	1,007,755	7%	45,628,631	6%	119.38	2.64
Mid Ulster	155,708	3%	613,667	4%	22,285,891	3%	143.13	3.94
Newry, Mourne and Down	404,442	9%	1,056,896	7%	47,736,730	6%	118.03	2.61
Northern Ireland	4,640,596	100%	15,432,195	100%	760,108,265	100%	163.8	3.33

Assessment of Tourism Product Offering in Downpatrick

4.4. Downpatrick is one of Ireland's most ancient and most historic towns. However, it has an accolade that most other towns in Ireland would love to have – it was the town where St. Patrick began his teaching of Christianity in this county. As Margaret Richie MP stated in one of her addresses to the House of Commons *"...No other place in Ireland can claim to have a more meaningful or stronger connection with Patrick. It was in the Downpatrick/Lecale region that Patrick landed and began his work in Ireland in 432AD, set up his first missionary base camp in Ireland, established his first church in Ireland and converted his first followers, developed his first training monastery in Ireland, had his main home at Saul during his mission to Ireland, wrote his famous 'Confessio' and 'Epistle ad Coroticus', bathed, rested, prayed at Struell Wells, died in 461AD and is buried on the Cathedral hill alongside St Brigid and St Columba..."*.

4.4.1 The town has a rich array of cultural and historical attractions and sites which led to a recent launch of the "St. Patrick Tourism Development Plan" which aimed to capitalise on the brand "Patrick" to attract greater numbers of visitors to the area with the aim of generating additional wealth to this community.

4.4.2 As part of this study, Peter Quinn Consultancy Services Ltd. reviewed and undertook site visits of the main attractions and historical sites in and around the Downpatrick area. The following paragraphs represent an overview of those attractions and their relative importance in terms of tourism traffic.

Down County Museum

4.5 Down County Museum, highlights the rich and important heritage of County Down through exciting exhibitions, events, workshops, and activities. The museum uses both permanent and temporary exhibitions, including the story of the rise of Christianity in Ireland and a visitor exploration of the old Down Gaol.

4.5.1 Some details about the facility are as follows:

- New activities and exhibitions recently opened;
- Tea rooms available;
- Free admission;
- Located in the town of Downpatrick.



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4.6 Downpatrick Racecourse is one of Northern Ireland's *only* two racecourses. It is also one of the oldest racecourses in Ireland, with the first race-meeting being held there in 1685. Downpatrick racecourse has always been one of the most important and popular attractions in the whole of Northern Ireland, attracting people from around the globe to one of their numerous racing meets held here throughout the year.

4.6.1 Some details on the recourse are as follows:

- It is located one mile from Downpatrick town centre;
- Holds the Ulster National every year;
- Has a meeting-room capacity of 450 and a catering capacity of 400;
- The track is approximately 1 mile (8 furlongs) in circumference;
- Attracts approximately 5000 people per racing meet, with between 5 and 10 meetings being held throughout the year.

**The St. Patrick Centre**

4.7 The St. Patrick centre is a museum/tourist centre dealing mainly with the iconic figure of St. Patrick. It includes tours of significant historical sites, as well as a museum and an information centre. It includes a St Patrick museum and exhibition, an I-max presentation, a craft shop, and a garden café. Within a mile of the centre is Inch Abbey, the first Church in Ireland at Saul (where the legend of the snakes was written), the oldest healing wells in Ireland at Struell and the tallest statue of Saint Patrick in the world at Raholp.

4.7.1 Some information on this attraction is as follows:

- Its main museum building is located in Downpatrick's town centre;
- In 2015, it had 103,425 visitors, a 2% increase from the previous year;
- It is open all year-round.



Downpatrick Visitor Information Centre

4.8 Conveniently situated in the St Patrick Centre, Market Street, Downpatrick the Visitor Information Centre offers high quality literature and information. Open all year round, it is fully accessible for wheelchair users and pushchairs. The centre provides information about the local area, its attractions and their opening times, where to eat, events, and so on. It is an invaluable resource for any tourist.

4.8.1 Some information on the centre is as follows:

- It is located in the same building as the Saint Patrick Centre;
- It had over 100,000 visitors in 2015;
- Parking is available;
- A printer is available for tickets;
- It is open all year-round.



Downpatrick and County Down Railway Society

4.9 The Down Railway is a heritage railway that allows visitors to take a train ride on a vintage train through the hills and countryside. The train stops at the historic inch abbey, the ruins of which are open to the public. There is also a museum in the station building and a railway workshop, as well as a gift shop and café for refreshments.

4.9.1 Some information about the attraction is as follows:

- Railway building and station are located within Downpatrick;
- It is Ireland's only full heritage railway;
- In 2015, it had 7,316 visitors;
- The train runs on a number of specified days throughout the year, the full timetable of which can be seen here: <http://www.downrail.co.uk/dates/>;
- Group bookings are available.

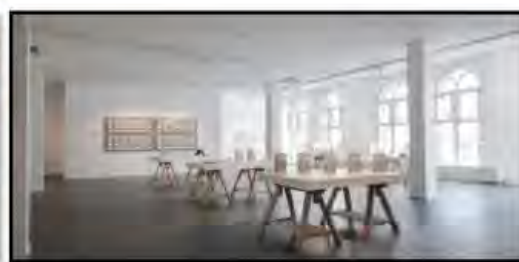


Down Arts Centre

4.10 Down Arts Centre acts as the base for the arts in County Down and the surrounding area. They host music festivals, plays, exhibitions, and a wide range of workshops held throughout the year. Down Arts Centre staff also programme and organise the annual Newcastle Summer Season entertainment programme.

4.10.1 Some information about this attraction is as follows:

- It is located in the heart of Downpatrick town centre;
- In 2015, the site had 53,237 visitors, a 21% increase from the previous year;
- Parking is available;
- There is a Craft Shop and Café for refreshments;
- It is open year-round with specific events running throughout the year;
- It is part of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism Department.



Castle Ward House

4.11 Castle Ward House and Demense (which is located approximately 8 miles from Downpatrick) boasts a beautiful 18th century mansion built with classical and gothic architecture. Visitors can explore the house and attended gardens at their leisure or attend one of many events held throughout the year. The house also includes a fun-farm experience for families and children, as well as a forest trail for both walkers and cyclists. The house is also one of the primary filming locations for HBO's popular

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television series "Game of Thrones" and was the location of Winterfell, the backdrop for the series' pilot and much of season one. It is also where one will find the Whispering Wood and key scenes including Robb Stark's Camp, the Baelor Battle and when Brienne confronted the Stark men. The Castle attracts many international tourists specifically for this reason with Clearsky Adventure Centre operating from this location.

4.11.1 Some specific information on Castle Ward House is as follows:

- It is only a 15-minute drive from Downpatrick;
- It won a silver award in the green tourism business scheme;
- It was the winner of a Highly Commended Award for Best Visitor Experience, in the NI Tourism Awards 2014;
- In 2015, it had 135,000 visitors, a 5% increase from the previous year;
- It is open all year round and runs numerous tours, events, and workshops throughout the year.



4.11.2 Also operating out of the Castle Ward House's grounds, the **Clearsky Adventure Centre** runs and operates numerous outdoor activities such as archery, canoeing, rock climbing, and mountain biking. It is an excellent day out for a family or large group; this centre has something for everyone. They also operate Game of Thrones film set tours which attract large numbers of people from all over the globe.

Delamont County Park

4.12 Delamont County Park is situated on the shore of the serene Strangford Lough in an area of natural beauty (approximately 4.5 miles from Downpatrick), and offers a wide variety of attractions, including:

- It has 1km - 7km woodland and lakeside walks;
- It provides stunning views of the Mourne Mountains;
- It has open areas for picnics, and a BBQ and Games area for hire;
- It contains an award-winning caravan and camping site;

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- There is a 1km long miniature railway with a Thomas the Tank engine lookalike for children and families;
- The Strangford stone, Ireland's largest stone megalith is close by;
- There are horse riding facilities available.

4.12.1 The site itself spans 200 acres, and is renowned for its warm and dry climate. The park is open year around, and runs numerous events throughout the year, such as birds of prey exhibitions, kite flying workshops, a reptile display, and even a 10k run. In 2015, the park had over 211,000 visitors.

**St Patrick's Golf Club**

4.13 St Patrick's Golf Club is a full 18-hole golf course situated just outside of Downpatrick. It attracts many people from all over Ireland on weekend golfing breaks as well as hosting numerous tournaments throughout the year. Golfing is one of the most important and popular sports in the whole of Northern Ireland, and indeed the world, and Downpatrick golf course benefits greatly from this popularity.

4.13.1 The golf club boasts:

- a Full 18-hole golf course,
- café and restaurant on site, and
- clubrooms and memberships available.

In addition it has other advantageous aspects, including:

- It is situated just under one mile from Downpatrick town centre
- It boasts beautiful views of the Mourne Mountains.



Attractions and Activities Close to Downpatrick

4.14 Within approximately a 20-minute car journey there is an additional range of useful attractions and activities. These are summarised below.

Murlough Nature Reserve

4.15 Murlough Nature Reserve was Ireland's first official nature reserve, opening in 1967. It is made based around a fragile 6,000-year-old sand dune system. It is set along Dundrum Bay at the foothills of the Mourne Mountains and is an excellent location for nature walks and bird-watching. Dogs are welcome, and facilities are available for visitors, including picnic sites and boardwalks through the dune system. The reserve is open all year.

4.15.1 Some interesting facts about this attraction include the following:

- It has the best and most extensive example of dune heath in Ireland;
- Over 22 butterfly species live in the reserve, several of which are rare;
- It is internationally important for wintering wildfowl and waders;
- There is a 'haul-out' site for Common and Grey seals;
- There is evidence of human habitation from Neolithic times, through the Bronze Age to the present day;
- It hosts self-guided nature walks, additional guided walks and volunteer events throughout the year; and
- It is only 20 minutes' drive from Downpatrick.



Dundrum Castle, Co.Down

4.16 Dundrum Castle is one of the oldest surviving examples of a Norman castle on the island of Ireland to this day. It was built in 1177 by John De Courcy, with amazing views of Dundrum Bay and the Mourne Mountains. It is classified as an Important Historical Site in Northern Ireland, and is linked with Cathedral Hill, Mound of Down, and Inch Abbey, all of which are located near Downpatrick. The ruins can be explored on foot throughout the year.

4.16.1 Some information about this attraction is as follows:

- It is located near the Murlough Nature Reserve, and is a 20 minute drive from Downpatrick town centre; and
- In 2015, approximately 59,000 people visited this castle.



Castlewellan Forest Park

4.17 Another of Co. Down's spectacular forest parks, Castlewellan Forest Park is renowned for having one of the most extensive foliage and shrub collections in all of Europe. The garden is a mixture of informal and formal designs with terraces, fountains, ornamental gates and flower borders. These gardens allow visitors to experience the beauty of 18th century landscaping. One of the park's main attractions is the Peace Maze, one of the world's largest permanent hedge maze structures. It was planted in 2000 with cross community support as a symbol of peace, and has recently attracted many visitors who attempt to solve the maze.

4.17.1 Information about the park can be summarised as follows:

- The Ulster History Circle has erected a Blue Plaque at the Park, dedicated to Artist lady Mabel Annesley (1881-1959) who lived on this estate;
- The park boasts some of the oldest and largest trees in Western Europe;
- It is 20 minutes from Downpatrick via car or bus;
- It is open year-round every day until sunset;
- Tea rooms and picnic areas are available;
- In 2015 the park had over 135,000 visitors and similar numbers in previous years.



Tollymore Outdoor Adventure Centre

- 4.18** Similar to Clearsky (paragraph 4.10.2 above), the Tollymore Outdoor Adventure Centre runs a wide variety of outdoor activities, such as orienteering, archery etc. and is available for booking. They also hold group events for both adults and children such as kids' birthday parties and team building exercises. It is located about 25 minutes from Downpatrick in Tollymore Forest Park

Tyrella Beach

- 4.19** Tyrella Beach is situated just south of Strangford Lough looking out on the Irish Sea. It boasts miles of sandy beaches and crystal clear waters. Facilities include beach lifeguards during the summer months, toilets, and an information centre. In addition:

- Tyrella has been awarded the prestigious Blue Flag and Seaside Award from 1997-2007 in recognition of high levels of beach cleanliness, safety, water quality and management;
- It had approximately 10,000 visitors in 2015;
- It has also been recommended by the Good Beach Guide as safe for bathing;
- It is approximately 17 minutes from Downpatrick and is a favourite among local holidaymakers.



Exploris Aquarium, Portaferry

- 4.20** Exploris Aquarium is located near Portaferry Co. Down, just a short ferry ride from Strangford, which is 20 minutes from Downpatrick. It is one of the highlight attractions in Co. Down and is an important site for marine conservation. It provides an excellent day out for families and adults alike and gives visitors valuable insights into aquatic life. The aquarium also runs a seal rehabilitation programme for injured seals and allows visitors to see and learn about seals in the wild.

- 4.20.1** Some relevant information about this facility includes the following:

- It is 40 minutes' journey (including ferry ride) from Downpatrick;

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- It includes a 'touch tank' to allow visitors to handle marine life such as urchins, starfish, and rays; and
- It includes facilities such as toilets, a gift shop, and a café for refreshments.

**Mount Stuart House and Gardens**

4.21 Mount Stewart House is an impressive 18th century mansion, surrounded by beautiful gardens which are now open to the public after a 3-year long restoration project by the National Trust.

4.21.1 Some key facts about this attraction are summarised as follows:

- It is ranked as the 10th most popular attraction in Northern Ireland in 2015 by visitor numbers (excluding county parks/forests);
- It had 185,000 visitors in 2015, a 19% increase from the previous year; and
- It is only 40 minutes from Downpatrick.

**Funny Farm Adventures**

4.22 Funny Farm Adventures is an activity centre hosting a wide variety of indoor and outdoor activities for families, children, and adults alike. This includes go-karting, garden games, archery, crazy golf, and their infamous "maize maze" – a maze through a field of corn involving puzzles and clues to find your way to the centre and

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back out again. It provides a fun day out for all the family and is just a short car journey from Downpatrick.

4.22.1 Key data about the attraction are as follows:

- It had 7,256 visitors in 2015;
- It holds new activities every year;
- It is located at the foot of the Mourne Mountains;
- It is only 18 minutes from Downpatrick.

**Tollymore Forest Park**

4.23 Tollymore Forest Park (located approximately 12 miles from Downpatrick) is a unique park that panders to the curious by blending the natural with the artificial e.g. its walk along the serene Shimna River with its caves and rocky outcrops, or among the experimental plantation plots of Eucalyptus or Monkey Puzzle. Oak wood from Tollymore was used to decorate the interior of the Titanic, making Tollymore one of the most important forest parks in Northern Ireland. It is a very romantic site at the foothills of the Mourne Mountains, and provides a perfect location for a day of walking or perhaps a picnic on a summer's day.

4.23.1 Key information about the Park includes the following:

- In 2015, 131,431 people visited the park;
- It is only 25 minutes from Downpatrick;
- It is located nearby Castlewellan;
- Toilets and baby changing facilities are available;
- ATMs are available;
- There are picnic tables throughout the property.



Feasibility Study - Report**Sightseeing**

4.24 In addition to “official” attractions, there are also a number of important historical landmarks surrounding Downpatrick. These include:

4.24.1 Inch Abbey: Founded by John De Courcy (along with Dumdrum Castle). The buildings are mainly from the 12th and 13th centuries, while it is believed the church is older than that at Grey Abbey which was built about 1193. The site is about one mile outside Downpatrick and so is easily accessible by tourists and visitors alike.



4.24.2 The Slieve Patrick Statue: This is an impressive statue of the Christian figure of Saint Patrick, sat atop a steep hill. It is a popular attraction for visitors and locals alike who enjoy walks in the countryside. Construction began on this statue in 1932, on the 1500th anniversary of St. Patrick’s landing in Ireland.



4.24.3 The Ballynoe Stone Circle: This stone circle lies in the small hamlet of Ballynoe, less than three miles from Downpatrick. It was excavated in 1937 by a Dutch archeologist, and remains an important site of historical and heritage significance. It is another important historical site for visitors and locals in the Downpatrick area, and a must see for any sightseers.



4.24.4 The Struell Wells: This stone circle also lies in the small hamlet of Ballynoe, less than three miles from Downpatrick. It was excavated in 1937 by a Dutch archaeologist, and remains an important site of historical and heritage significance. It is another important historical site for visitors and locals in the Downpatrick area, and a must see for any sightseers.

**Music, Events, and Festivals**

4.25 There are a number of events that occur annually in close proximity to Downpatrick which attract a significant footfall. These are summarised below:

Downpatrick Culture Night

- 4.26** This relatively new event offers a night of celebration of culture in Downpatrick, building on its previous two years to bring another unforgettable night for the third year in a row, drawing out locals as well as large numbers of people from all over the country. According to their website:

"With the main stage being located in St Patrick's Square in the town centre, various interactive activities will be taking place throughout the 3 hour event including, live dance, traditional Irish music, some Eastern European music, Local school performances, rock bands, blues bands, street entertainment. The 2nd venue is Down Arts Centre where a full program of events is also planned including music, film and design."

Overall, this event is one that has grown immensely in popularity over the three years since it has been initiated and already indicates a reliable influx of tourists and attendees over the coming years. A free event for all, it is sure bring people out to the streets in droves. In 2015, the attendee numbers were in the several hundreds

Finnebrogue Artisan Hans Sloane Chocolate & Fine Food Festival

- 4.27** Taking place in the village of Killyleagh, just a short drive from Downpatrick, this 3-day event is an exhibition of artisan food and chocolate. Thousands of chocolate and food lovers descend on the village in an all-out celebration of all things food. Sponsored by local Downpatrick business Finnebrogue, this is yet another example of Downpatrick's expression of culture. According to the website:

"Founded in 2010 to celebrate Killyleagh's most famous son, Hans Sloane, who was born in the village in 1660 and later became one of the most famous men of his time partially because of his development of milk chocolate, our festival has grown from strength to strength and is now regarded as one of the leading events of its type in the UK and Ireland and a highlight of the summer calendar in Killyleagh."

Summary of Visitor Attraction Numbers

- 4.28** The table overleaf summarises the level and breadth of visitor numbers at the main attractions within, or in close proximity to, Downpatrick.

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Attraction	Type	Travel time from Downpatrick	Visitor numbers in 2015
Castle Ward House	Heritage site/Museum	15 minutes	135,000
St. Patrick Centre	Museum/Visitor Centre	-	103,425
Downpatrick and Co. Down Railway Society	Heritage site/Museum	-	7,316
Delamont County Park	Park	10 minutes	211,000
Down Arts Centre	Theatre and Arts	-	53,237
Murlough Nature Reserve	Nature Reserve	20 Minutes	-
Dundrum Castle	Heritage Site	20 Minutes	59,000
Castlewellan Forest Park	Park	20 minutes	135,000
Clearsky Adventure Centre	Activity Centre	15 minutes	-
Tollymore Outdoor Adventure Centre	Activity Centre	25 minutes	-
Downpatrick Racecourse	Sports and leisure	5 minutes	25,000 - 50,000 ¹
St. Patrick Golf course	Sports and Leisure	5 minutes	-
Tyrella Beach	Beach	17 minutes	10,000-20,000 ²
Exploris Aquarium	Aquarium	30 - 40 minutes	-
Mount Stewart House	Heritage site/Museum	40 minutes	185,000
Down County Museum	Museum	-	44,000 ³
Funny Farm Adventures	Activity Centre	18 minutes	7,256
Tollymore Forest Park	Park	25 minutes	131,431

1. Number based on an estimate of 5,000 people per race meeting across 5-10 race meetings a year.
2. Number based on visitor count of 10,000 from June – September 2015. Visitor numbers were unavailable for the rest of the year.
3. Based on statistics provided by the Down Museum.

Summary of Attractions/Tourist Potential

- 4.29** The preceding paragraphs clearly indicate that Downpatrick has a rich tapestry of attractions, most of which centre around history, Christianity, cultural and modern TV tourism (with the various Game of Thrones sites currently being major attractions to the area). For example, one facility alone within its immediate hinterland attracts over 211,000 day visitors per annum² with the town itself attracting 103,000 visitors

² Delamont Country Park

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per annum to its best attended attraction³. Despite that fact, the town does not benefit significantly from its tourist offering, apparently primarily because of the absence of adequate hotel facilities, according to locals.

A recent accommodation study indicated that the vast majority of the visitors to the attractions in the region (80%) are domestic visitors, only 13% originating from the overseas market and with only a very small proportion actually converting to overnight stays. There is a significant challenge involved in making a really difference to the profile of this town's visitor base and converting the numbers of visitors to the town and its hinterland into a consistently reasonable level of overnight-stay visits.

³ St. Patrick's Visitor Centre

5.0 CONSULTATION PROCESS & FINDINGS

5.1 A range of consultations were held with key stakeholders across the community and with statutory bodies. The following represents the consultants' opinion based on the general flavour of the comments received in relation to the need/demand for a hotel in Downpatrick.

- **The Issue Of An Hotel In Downpatrick Has Been Raised Consistently For Some Time:** Many of those consulted with made reference to the many attempts to get a hotel project off the ground (since the Abbey Lodge Hotel closed) but there always seemed to be something to stop this project from happening. There were several references to the most recent effort which was hindered by the chosen site (Church Street), which was and is subject to flooding and this became a planning issue that could not be resolved.

There were consistent references to the many attempts to get a hotel in the area (including its being mentioned in successive Master plans for the town and in a host of other strategic documents prepared for the current and former district councils). But there always appeared to be problems with identifying a suitable site, securing finance, obtaining realistic interest from any prospective developer, planning issues etc. As recently as 2009, a developer was close to investing in the development of an 80 bedroom hotel on the site of the former Abbey Lodge Hotel along the Belfast road, but this fell through due to the adverse economic circumstances of the time.

- **The Abbey Lodge site is a live potential development site for a hotel:** In recent weeks, the Abbey Lodge site has been identified again as a potential development site. Discussions with a consultant architect making representation on behalf of his client has indicated that advanced plans are in place for the development of a 50-60 bedroom hotel on the site. Information provided to this consultancy from the architect involved as is as follows:

The site is located on the Belfast Road, and is approximately 2.4 Ha in area. Previously the site was occupied the by former Abbey Hotel. The mature site benefits from ease of access both into and out of Downpatrick, and is immediately adjacent to the popular tourist attraction of Inch Abbey. It is also located along the St Patrick's Way route, which starting at the Navan Centre in Armagh, this 82 mile signed walking trail connects key sites relating to Saint Patrick and Christian Heritage. It takes you through some of Northern Ireland's most spectacular scenic landscapes before ending at Saint Patrick's final resting place, in the grounds of Down Cathedral in Downpatrick. Also immediately to

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the site is the popular Downpatrick & County Down Heritage Railway, which runs through the drumlin countryside of County Down, - over the River Quoile and under the graceful Down Cathedral to the peaceful ruins of Inch Abbey. The site can accommodate immediate development.

Proposals have been prepared by Inch Abbey Holdings Ltd for a new 6,400m² hotel on the site, to include 51 bedrooms, functions rooms and health spa. There will be ancillary hotel facilities, all at ground level serving the general public, as well as guests. These include the hotel reception and the bar and restaurant. There are flexible function room spaces that can act as separate elements with their own access, or can be accessed through the main hotel reception. Augmenting these spaces are 2 no. conference rooms. The accommodation will be centred around a landscaped courtyard, bringing light into the centre of the plan.

The health spa will operate both as a self-contained element, and also to augment the hotel facilities. The spa accommodation includes a 15mx 7m pool and associated jacuzzi/sauna, changing facilities, gym, fitness rooms, and double height reception that leads to spa treatment rooms on the upper level.

The building will be finished externally using high quality finishes such as stone and slate. The hotel grounds will be landscaped and include ample car parking (182 vehicles) and bus parking facilities.

- **Downpatrick Is Seen As A Drive-Through Town:** A number of those consulted referred to Downpatrick as being a town to which visitors come in buses and stay for an hour or so, before moving on; that results in minimal economic benefit to the town itself. Discussions with a major tourism provider in the town (The Director of the St. Patrick's Centre) clearly indicated that his organisation, with local partners, have been responsible for bringing circa 800 coach tours to the town annually (with the summer months representing the core period for this business). It was indicated that the biggest draw-back in dealing with coach tours is the inability to offer them package deals i.e. involving a good quality overnight stay that could host up to 60 people on a coach tour and would persuade such visitors to remain in Downpatrick for an overnight stay. Put simply, it was suggested that, if a quality hotel was available in the locality, there was no reason why such coach operators would not factor-in staying in Downpatrick as part of their trip. The reality is that such overnight stays are lost to Belfast and other surrounding areas.
- **Coach Tours Are 'Accommodation-Led':** Discussions with tourist product providers in the town clearly indicate that there is a high volume of coach tours

- frequenting Downpatrick each year to visit the St. Patrick's Centre or for the Game of Thrones tours (which are extremely popular at the present time). The general view was that coach tour operators firstly seek to secure quality accommodation before the tour is finalised and that Downpatrick is losing out on such potential economic benefit 'at the very first hurdle'. Essentially, Downpatrick is not currently on the radar of coach operators to arrange a stop-over in the town. One contributor was keen to point out that the provision of quality hotel accommodation in Downpatrick would be "*a complete game-changer*" for the community of Downpatrick and this would act as a catalyst for more investment in, and improvement of their existing tourism product offerings.
- **A major coach tour operator felt Downpatrick has a lot of offer:** Discussions with one of the major tour and coach operators in Ireland (Dublin) provided a particular insight as to what coach operators look out for when organising packaged tours for their clients. The operator was very clear that to be in a position to capture part of the market that exists around coach tours that the hotel must be a minimum of a 3-star standard as international visitors will not purchase a 2-star hotel. The tour operator was also clear that at least a 50-60 bedroom hotel would be required to facilitate coach tour packages and, ideally, a 75-bedroom hotel would be ideal to take a second coach. The tour operator felt that Downpatrick is ideally located to provide an authentic experience for visitors to Ireland (with the ties to St. Patrick) and that the hotel should be close (walking distance) to the town with adequate lighting and accessibility (i.e. footpaths).
 - **There Is Much To See In Downpatrick But There Is Little Coordination Of The Different Attractions:** Downpatrick has a wealth of tourist product offerings but the consultants got the feeling that there is very little in the way of collaborative marketing to maximise the economic benefit to the area. It appeared that there were a number of attractions/offering that could be cross-sold, but that this was not happening in any strategic fashion. Furthermore, a lot of the tourist attractions around Downpatrick are 'free' and, whilst many have considerable historical and cultural value (mostly around St. Patrick), they were not presented in the most attractive way. A lot of them looked like they were not being maintained properly and signage to some of the attractions was virtually non-existent, with some of the interpretative literature relating to the sites being either dated or located in parts of the site that did not seem appropriate.
 - There were some sites that were clearly not developed to their full potential (such as Saul Church Graveyard, which was overgrown and St. Patrick's Chair, which appeared to have no safe access). With such a breadth of potential

tourism offerings in the area, the consultants felt that a clear strategy needed to be developed, in order to maximise the potential of these sites (from a signage and development perspective) and a need for a holistic approach to collaborative marketing. However, it must be indicated that without the capacity to keep people overnight, the potential to retain visitors (such as coach tours) beyond one-hour in Downpatrick will represent a really major challenge. It was felt by some people consulted that building a hotel will not fix obvious problems associated with Downpatrick on a wider scale. Certainly, investment is urgently required on its tourist products and a more holistic approach to marketing is required. Essentially a number of people thought that Downpatrick, despite its rich culture and heritage value, is really not “visitor-ready”.

- **Downpatrick Racecourse Is Potentially A Major Attraction But The Town Itself Does Not Benefit From It.** Downpatrick racecourse is one of only two racecourses in Northern Ireland (the other being Down Royal). The racecourse has a long history is horse-racing with the very first horserace in Ireland occurring 330 years ago in Downpatrick (1685)– the horse that won that day was the famous “The Byerley Turk” which is renowned as one of only three core stallions that are the progenitors of modern thoroughbred racehorses.

The racecourse usually has 10 meetings per year, attracting 30,000-40,000 people annually. Discussions with the Racecourse manager indicated that a lot of horse-racing enthusiasts (especially those involved with winners and placed horses) like to stay a night, but do not have that opportunity in Downpatrick, given the dearth of sufficient quality accommodation. The recourse manager was very much in favour of a hotel in Downpatrick and was excited about the opportunities for collaborating and providing package deals for its customers. The recourse has future plans to develop and grow into “a racing festival” (like Punchestown, Galway, Listowel to mention a few others) which will engage with the local population and bring significant spin-off economic benefits to the community. The racecourse has also advanced plans to attract other major events to the Racecourse, including concerts and international equine events.

- **It Was Unanimous Accepted By Those Consulted That An Hotel In Downpatrick ‘Would Work’:** Despite the many efforts to bring a hotel project to Downpatrick and the many failed attempts to deliver on that aspiration, almost everyone that was consulted locally (including the majority of key stakeholders) were of the view that a hotel in Downpatrick, located close to the town, would become a successful and thriving business. There were considerable references to the many attractions (as outlined above) which are bringing substantial numbers of visitors to the town, with no direct economic benefit resulting; that included the

coach tours, the attractions, Game of Thrones aficionados, the racecourse etc. It was indicated that there were many other towns across Northern Ireland (outside the main centres of population and activity), which have numerous successful hotels, even though they would not have the volumes of tourism traffic that “pass through” Downpatrick. Most of those consulted felt the location of any such hotel would be critical and that it needed to be in close proximity to the town to be successful; reference was made to the number of hotels, which were located a mile or more outside towns, which have closed down in recent times.

- **The Biggest Challenge Has To Be How To Keep Those Who Do Come, To Stay:** The vast majority of those consulted conceded that Downpatrick is not particularly strategically located. It is not a town that many people drive through on their way to Belfast or Dublin. Therefore, there has to be a conscious decision by visitors to come to Downpatrick. Any Hotel in this area, if it is to be successful, will need to maximise the potential to convert passing visitors into ‘overnight stays’ and that will have to be the approach if such an investment is to be successful.

Therefore, any new hotel operator will need to be extremely proactive in networking, in collaborative marketing, and the organisation of activities and opportunities designed to maximise the occupancy.

- **The Business Base In Downpatrick Is Relatively Weak:** There were some negative comments which might be interpreted as signifying why there has been a difficulty in attracting investment for a hotel development in Downpatrick. In the main, such people suggested that Downpatrick’s corporate sector and its business profile are relatively weak, that it is heavily reliant on the public sector and small indigenous enterprises, and that it will need to improve its corporate strengths, if it is to harness the potential of its tourism attractions. It was widely suggested that a hotel in the area (unlike somewhat similar areas such as Enniskillen or Cookstown) could not rely on the corporate sector to boost trade for the hotel. However, it was felt that there were, and are, other opportunities in Downpatrick, which could be maximised, with the tourist traffic representing one of the biggest areas of such potentials.
- **Golfing Visitors Could Become A Target Market For A Hotel In This Area:** The wider hinterland of Downpatrick has a number of golf courses (Downpatrick, Ardglass and Royal County Down, being three) which could contribute a relatively steady overnight-stay market. It is accepted that the vast majority of golfers to

Royal County Down would probably stay in Newcastle (in the Slieve Donard) but that there are opportunities to create and offer packaged deals with Ardglass and Downpatrick for golfers, which cannot be exploited at the present time.

- **Other Providers In The Area Are Delivering Some Of The Services, Which Would Normally Be Provided By An Hotel:** There was a view amongst some of those consulted that a lot of the potential local "function-business" is currently being provided by the Cricket Club and Downpatrick Racecourse and the evidence from this study confirmed that. The reality is that there is a demand for such facilities in the area and, in the absence of a hotel capable of providing such facilities, the Cricket Club & the Racecourse have made strenuous efforts (and investments) to capture this business, and have been successful. There were some concerns that the function business has to be potentially a real, main-stay of the revenue generating activities of any hotel (especially during off-peak season) and that this business is not guaranteed, given the other providers in this marketplace, with lower cost bases than an hotel would have.
- **Site Availability For A Hotel Within The Town, Could Be An Issue:** During the consultations a multitude of potential sites were mentioned, but there was no clear, obvious, ideal site. There are inner town properties which would accommodate a boutique-type hotel, but sites suggested for a modern hotel with full facilities were mostly out-of-town, though in most cases still quite close to it..
- **The Type Of Hotel To Be Developed Needs To Match The Potential Visitor Profile:** There was consistent views e that any hotel in Downpatrick would need to be pitched at the correct level and to be appropriate to the type of visitor that the town is attracting. For example, many of those consulted were of the view that a 4-star hotel and upwards might not be in keeping with the type of visitor that Downpatrick attracts. While the broad consensus was that the hotel should be of a 3-star standard, there were some who felt that Downpatrick's best hope of attracting an hotel operator to the town was for a good quality hotel, which would not be overpriced relative to the type of visitor which the town attracts i.e. the top end of the 4-star spectrum.
- **There Is A Tentative Proposal For A Community-Based Hotel In Downpatrick.** As a result of the community consultations, it was established that a local community partnership (The Downpatrick Community Collective) is keen to advance proposals to develop a major social enterprise/community hub in Downpatrick, using a combination of Neighbouring Renewal Funding with Heritage Lottery funds. The proposed project would probably also involve a

retail park, together with a community-based project involving the provision of suitable accommodation. In that context, the model of the Downshire Arms Hotel in Hilltown was mentioned (it has a number of apartment type accommodation suites) as well as the Sliabh Beagh Hotel in Knockatallon, Co. Monaghan, which has 14 bedrooms. Both of these were funded by the International Fund for Ireland.

The community group indicated that it was seeking to acquire the vacated Police Station, or a site on Stream Street, in order to provide 30-50 rooms, capable of accommodating up to 100 guests, at most. The community partnership acknowledged that they were at a very early stage with their proposals and it would probably be four to five years before any such project would be developed.

- **Any Hotel Proposal Should Ensure That The Culture Of The Area Would Be A Central Theme of The Development:** A number of those consulted felt that any hotel for this area should recognise the importance of the history and culture of Downpatrick (as detailed in the preceding section of this report) and that the “authenticity” of the area should be a central theme of any such project i.e. that it should not be simply a commercial hotel.
- **There Is Heritage Lottery Funding Available To Develop Listed Buildings:** It was indicated by a number of consultees that social-enterprise funding is available through the Heritage Lottery, which could be used to develop a community-led initiative such as the development of a hotel incorporating the development of a listed building. Furthermore, it was indicated that the community sector could source the funding to develop the hotel, but that its management would then be transferred to private operators with experience of such activities. It was argued that this was an option worth exploring.
- **Local Hotel Owners Have Plans To Extend The Current Provision:** Discussions with the owner of Denvir’s Hotel revealed that he has specific plans to extend and develop his hotel. At present, Denvir’s is not listed as a hotel because. According to Tourism Northern Ireland’s ratings, it has only seven bedrooms. The owner of the property has ground to the rear of his property which could be developed so as to provide a total of 22-25 bedrooms. He is currently seeking assistance to move that project forward.

Discussions were also held with the owner of Ballyduggan Mill. He currently provides 22 bedrooms and his business is targeted primarily at the wedding

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market. He has recently acquired additional space close to the mill and plans to expand his facility to over 40 bedrooms by further refurbishment of the Mill.

A number of consultees expressed a preference that ownership of new hotel should be local, so that potential profits would be retained within the local community and not be siphoned-off by overseas hotel chains.

- **A Range Of Potential Sites For A New Hotel Were Discussed:** A range of contributors suggested a number of potential locations for the development of any new hotel. They included:
 1. The Former Down Hospital Site;
 2. The Down High School Site;
 3. The Site of the Former Abbey Lodge Hotel
 4. Old Down Business Centre on the Saul Road;
 5. The Social Services Building at Lower Market Street;
 6. The Old Council Buildings On Strangford Road;
 7. The Vacated Northern Bank Property;
 8. The Vacated Police Station;
 9. A Collection of Disused Properties on Church Street;
 10. Some Properties on English Street;
 11. The Site at Corner of Church Street/Scotch Street;
 12. The Property to the Rear of Denvir's Hotel (for expansion by Denvir's);
 13. The Custom's House, English Street.
 14. Grove Shopping Centre, Market Street
 15. Former Telephone Exchange at Church Street.

No analyses of any of these sites were undertaken during the research underlying the content of this report. Considerable work, potentially including negotiations with a possible developer, or a number of potential developers would be necessary before that aspect could be pursued.

6.0 ANALYSIS OF CURRENT PROVISION OF HOTEL ACCOMMODATION IN DOWNPATRICK & HOTEL STATISTICS

6.1 This study aims to ascertain whether a clear need and demand exists for the provision of hotel accommodation in this area. As a starting point, an overview of the Hotel industry in Northern Ireland was undertaken, together with an analysis of the current provision of all types of accommodation using published reports and statistic available coupled with on-the-ground knowledge of the various forms of accommodation available locally. The following paragraphs provide an overview of the accommodation profile of Newry, Mourne & Down District Council (compared to other Council areas across Northern Ireland) and an assessment of current status of accommodation in Downpatrick, with comparisons being provided in relation to towns of a broadly similar size.

Northern Ireland Hotel Performance, January-December 2014, As Quantified By Tourism Northern Ireland

6.2 In 2014, the NI hotel industry produced a relatively positive performance, achieving growth and record levels for both rooms and bed-spaces sold. The number of hotel rooms (1,859,880) and bed-spaces (2,941,555) sold during 2014 increased by 2% on the previous year and that represents the highest recorded room and bed-spaces usage since records began. There were an additional 22,500 hotel rooms and 931,000 bed spaces sold, compared with the preceding year (Jan-Dec 2013).

6.2.1 Capacity utilisation over the period Jan-Dec 2014 increased by 1%, compared with 2013, in respect of 134 hotels operating 7,809 rooms and 17,470 bed-spaces. Performance varied across Northern Ireland, regions with hotels in the Mid-East (Greater Belfast region) enjoying the highest increases in occupancy levels, while Belfast itself and Castlereagh saw a 3% decline in bed-space occupancy.

6.2.2 During 2014, the largest average increase in room occupancy was in hotels within the 26-50 room capacity. Smaller establishments, on average, attracted the lowest levels of demand. All hotels experienced increases in bed-space occupancy except those with 100+ rooms. The largest establishments, primarily 3*-5* establishments attract the highest demand.

6.2.3 During 2014 mid-range hotels (priced in the range £50-£59.99 per night) enjoyed a significant increase in both room and bed space occupancy, each increasing by 7%. Room occupancy levels in hotels priced £40-£49.99 experienced no change in room

occupancy while bed-occupancy fell by 4%. Hotels in the £60+ category remained reasonably consistent with the same period in 2013.

Hotel Statistics in Newry, Mourne & Down District

- 6.3** The table below provide a summary of the hotel accommodation right across Northern Ireland by district council area, for 2015. The table demonstrates that there are 12 hotels in the Newry, Mourne & Down District (which is ranked joint third of the eleven council areas in that respect) but is ranked fifth in terms of bedroom availability.
- 6.3.1** Interestingly, this Council area is ranked second in terms of the number of B&Bs, guesthouses and self-catering accommodation (behind the Causeway district). This would demonstrate that the area is generally catering for a market that prefers this form of accommodation i.e. cheaper accommodation. Whether that could or would be changed by the availability of a wider range of accommodation cannot be determined from the available data.

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Year	Local Government District	Hotels			Guesthouses, Bed & Breakfast, and Guest Accommodation			Self Catering			Other			All		
		No	Rooms	Beds	No	Rooms	Beds	No	Rooms	Beds	No	Rooms	Beds	No	Rooms	Beds
2015	Antrim and Newtownabbey	10	631	1,295	29	104	239	14	145	263	2	1,539	1,587	55	2,419	3,384
	Ards and North Down	7	299	606	47	189	413	103	308	618	4	71	241	161	867	1,878
	Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	7	208	531	36	133	308	27	102	213	2	31	121	72	474	1,173
	Belfast	32	3,386	7,130	36	283	575	90	480	919	11	1,948	2,352	169	6,097	10,976
	Causeway Coast and Glens	20	723	1,942	182	795	1,876	689	2,952	5,563	17	474	904	908	4,944	10,285
	Derry City and Strabane	11	659	1,597	60	216	502	50	246	510	6	589	740	127	1,710	3,349
	Fermanagh and Omagh	11	415	973	74	395	951	171	912	1,936	5	53	219	261	1,775	4,079
	Lisburn and Castlereagh	4	255	593	26	108	242	30	116	237	0	0	0	60	479	1,072
	Mid and East Antrim	12	479	1,063	52	159	359	48	160	315	3	144	210	115	942	1,947
	Mid Ulster	9	238	588	30	132	301	39	139	300	0	0	0	78	509	1,189
	Newry, Mourne and Down	12	529	1,227	114	485	1,110	173	625	1,267	12	184	679	311	1,823	4,283
	Northern Ireland	135	7,822	17,545	686	2,999	6,876	1,434	6,185	12,141	62	5,033	7,053	2,317	22,039	43,615

Hotels in the Downpatrick Area

6.4 There are only two accommodation providers in the immediate Downpatrick area that could be considered in the same market space as any possible new hotel - Denvir's Hotel and Ballyduggan Mill. The Slieve Donard and the Portaferry Hotel are around ten miles and eight miles from Downpatrick respectively.

6.4.1 Ballyduggan Mill: Ballydugan Mill is a beautifully restored 18th century former Flour Mill, just two miles outside Downpatrick. Originally built in 1792 and respectfully brought back to life by the current owner, Mr Noel Killen, this hotel is located in a quiet countryside setting and it emphasises its rustic romantic setting. The Mill is generally marketed as a Wedding Venue, as opposed to a conventional hotel. The owner has plans to extend the current 22 en-suite rooms to 40 rooms, in the near future.

As shown by its picture below, it retains all the classical hallmarks of a traditional mill or similar building and they add to its charm, and not just as a wedding venue.



Denvir's Hotel

6.5 Established in 1642, Denvir's Hotel is steeped in history. It was and still is named after the famous Robert Denvir (who allegedly lived to the age of 100). The Denvirs were a local family of Norman extraction (probably originally spelt d'Anver, according to historians). The name was largely peculiar to Down's Lecale, which is where it is still most common.

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The building is the oldest surviving Coaching Inn in Ireland (and is now a grade 'A' listed building). The building itself has been extensively and sympathetically renovated while retaining its original character. With six attractive and beautifully restored bedrooms, it also contains a restaurant, lounge and snug bars, as well as two function rooms for hire.



Summary of Hotel Accommodation in Downpatrick

- 6.6 Downpatrick has a comparable (probably higher in fact) number of visitor attractions as other rural areas of its size across Northern Ireland, yet the town itself operates with a distinct lack of basic hotel accommodation. It has a population of around 11,000, but has only two hotels (Denvir's Hotel and the Mill Hotel) providing just **28 rooms between them.**

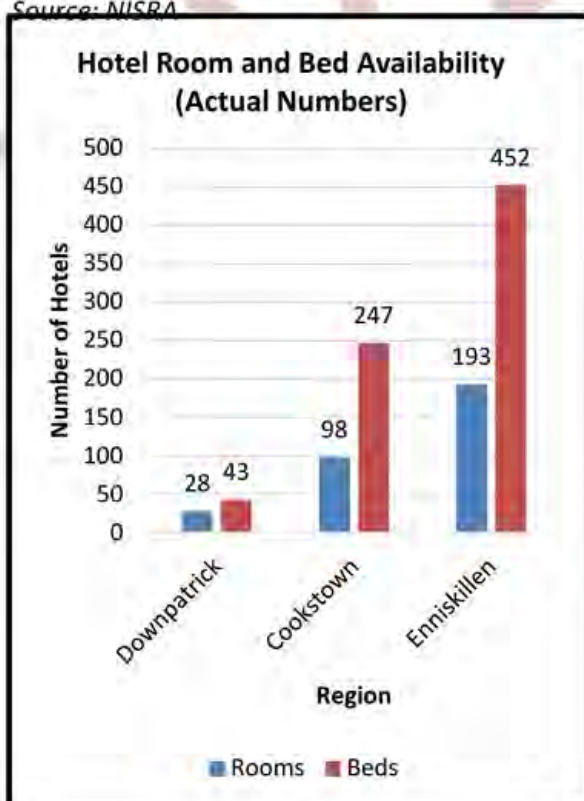
The only other available non-B&B accommodation option in the broad locality is the Slieve Donard, a large, expensive 4-star hotel in the relatively small town of Newcastle about 13 miles south of Downpatrick, making it significantly further from many of Downpatrick's primary attractions and targeting a significantly different market. However, Newcastle has the major advantage of being a seaside location, which acts as a hugely valuable visitor attractor. This, combined with the price and luxury appeal, make this option less attractive to would-be visitors to other parts of the area.

Comparative Hotel Assessment

6.7 The total of 28 hotel-type rooms in Downpatrick represents (from a spatial equality perspective) 2.71 rooms for every 1,000 people. Comparing that with a randomly selected town of comparable size (with arguably less tourist appeal), Cookstown has four hotels in its immediate vicinity – the Glenavon, the Royal, the Greenvale, and Tullylagan Country House - providing a total of **98 rooms** and **247 bed spaces**, or just over 22 bed rooms per 1,000 people. The following table provides a summary of the key hotel accommodation statistics in Downpatrick vis-à-vis Cookstown and Enniskillen which have broadly similar population bases (with Enniskillen possibly representing a better comparison as it relies on tourism rather than on corporate entities for hotel occupancy).

Hotel Rooms & Bed Spaces Per 1,000 Population		
	Rooms per 1,000 capita	Beds per 1,000 capita
Downpatrick	2.714	4.168
Cookstown	8.909	22.455
Enniskillen	14.192	33.238
Newry, Mourne and Down	3.331	7.727
Mid Ulster	1.349	3.334
Fermanagh and Omagh	2.960	6.940

Source: AUISRA



This is represented diagrammatically in the chart.

The graph opposite highlights a distinct disparity in hotel bed/room space availability across three comparable towns. The y axis represents the number of hotel bedrooms in each region with the x-axis showing the town/area in question.

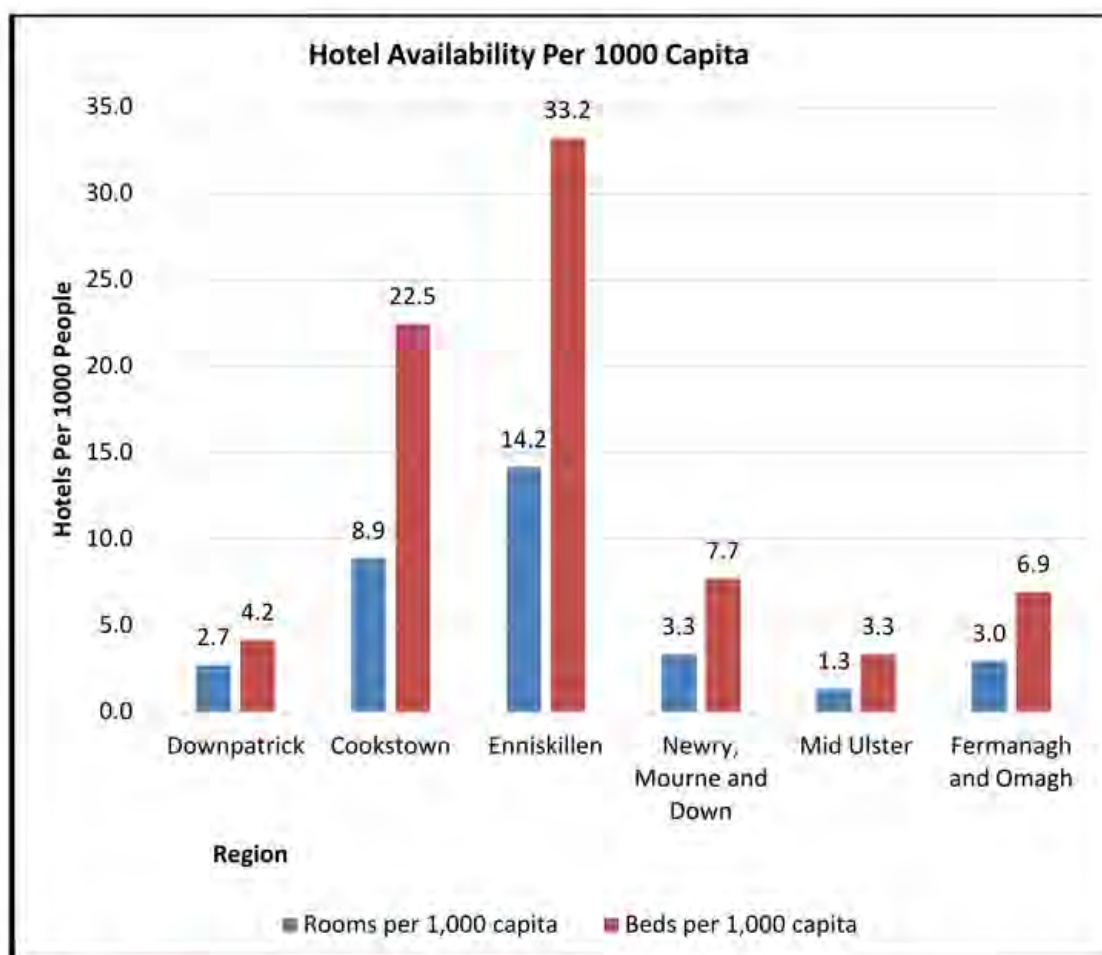
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6.7.1 The chart below summarises the situation in relation to the population of the area (i.e. per 1,000 capita) to give a relative perspective across the three areas and their respective Council areas by their population base. The detailed statistics are attached in Appendix 2.



6.7.2 Some inferences that can be drawn from the data presented in the bar chart above, as follows:

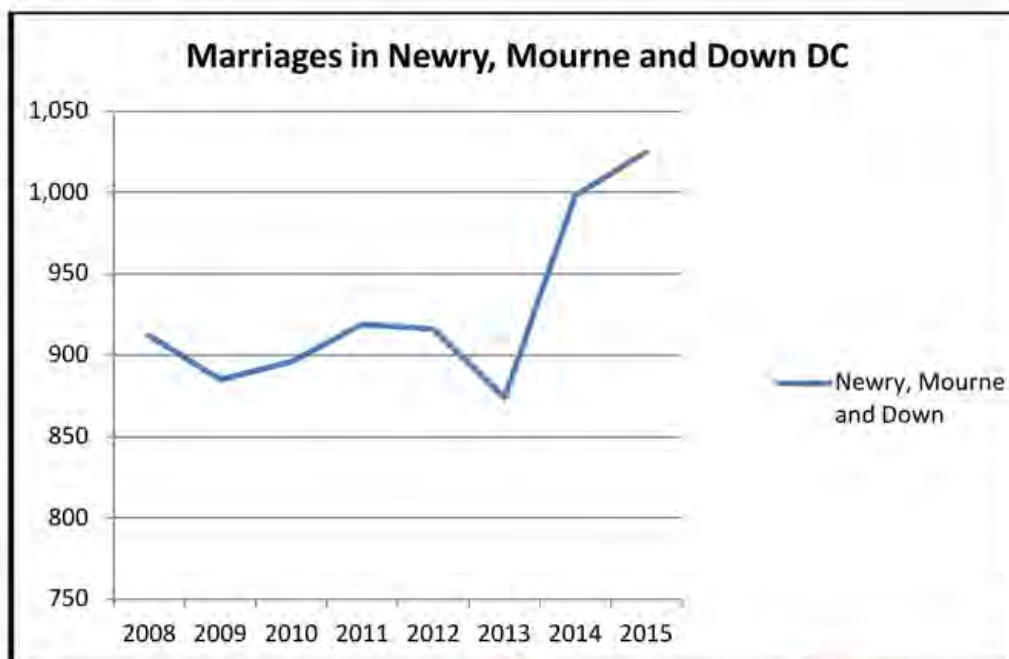
- Downpatrick has a significantly lower than average number of hotel rooms compared to the overall Newry, Mourne & Down District Council;
- Hotels are usually provided in areas of reasonably high population; Enniskillen and Cookstown has 33 and 22 rooms per 1,000 of population respectively demonstrating a policy by developers to locate in highly populated areas.
- Downpatrick has only 4.71 bedrooms per 1,000 capita; thus, the inference is that (on average) some 120 marriages that occur annually within the area will largely bring their business elsewhere, given the dearth of such facilities locally.

7.0 THE HOTEL WEDDING MARKET

- 7.1** The Wedding market is a significant and consistent part of any successful hotel's activity and its impact cannot be underestimated in terms of its contribution to revenue and profits for almost any hotel in Ireland. A recent Mintel report suggested that a standard hotel in the UK would obtain approximately one-third of its total revenue through weddings alone. Accordingly, the likely volume of weddings in this locality will be an important indicator for any potential private developer, in considering whether to invest in the development of a hotel in Downpatrick.
- 7.2** The most recent NISRA statistical bulletin on marriages in Northern Ireland indicates that approximately 8,355 marriages were recorded in 2015 (or 16,710 people) at a marriage rate of 4.5 marriages per 1,000 people per annum. Marriage rates have increased significantly year on year since the recession in 2009 from a low of 7,931 (with the exception of 2013, where it is suggested the number '13' had a direct impact on people's decision to get married that year) . The chart below summarises the total marriages since 2008.



- 7.3** The total marriages in the Newry, Mourne & Down District council area has generally increased year on year since 2008, as the chart below demonstrates:



- 7.4** A total of 1,025 marriages occurred in 2015 in the district, indicating a marriage rate of 5.8 per 1,000 people (which was considerably higher than the average for Northern Ireland). Using that as a guide for Downpatrick's population of circa 11,000 would suggest, on average, that there would be in excess of 60 marriages per year within the Downpatrick area.
- 7.5** This represents the immediate wedding market for a potential hotel in the area. Statistics available from the Irish Wedding Survey 2015 suggests that the average wedding venue costs €9,600 (i.e. venue and costs of meal); the Bank of Ireland 2015 Wedding survey indicates that, on average, each individual attending a wedding spends approximately €100. Whilst these more detailed statistics are available only in the Republic of Ireland, some inferences can be drawn from them. If it is assumed that the standard of living in NI is 25% less than in RoI, the value to Hotels for a standard wedding of 100 guests would be approximately £15,000. **Accordingly, the value of the immediate wedding market in Downpatrick could be conservatively estimated at approximately £1 million per annum (for 63 weddings).** This calculation does not take account of other areas in close proximity to Downpatrick.

Summary of Need for Hotel in Downpatrick

- 7.6** Based on the preceding analysis in terms of the strategic location, demographics, the tourism product offering/footfall, the wedding market and the assessment of current hotel provision in the Downpatrick area, there appears to be a compelling case that a clear need (and gap) exists for a hotel in the area. The area is not without competition with two small hotel-type providers in the area currently providing 28

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bedrooms. The development of a new hotel might potentially displace activity from these hotels depending on the type of market any new hotel would aim to attract. The Ballyduggan Mill clearly markets itself as primarily a small wedding venue, with Denvir's not able to capitalise on that market at all, given that it has only six bedrooms.

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8.0 CONCLUSION ON NEED/DEMAND

8.1 The preceding analyses indicate clearly (based on statistics, assessment of current provision of hotels in the area and the volume of tourist traffic and footfall into the area) that there is a clear gap and opportunity to provide a hotel offering in the Downpatrick area. However, in cases such as this, the private sector usually has the ability to exploit such opportunities but in this case they have not – this provides some cause for concern as this signifies an apparent presence of market failure.

Market Failure

8.2 Market failure is essentially a situation where markets are prevented from effectively providing the goods and services that are demanded by consumers, in the desired quantities. Market failure generally provides a rationale for government to intervene to influence and/or adjust the market for the betterment of the economy. In the case for the potential provision of a hotel in Downpatrick, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that government could have a legitimate and economically beneficial role in correcting market failures that prevent the free-market from operating efficiently.

8.2.1 The Downpatrick area is the second largest settlement in the district accounting for 6% of the total population (circa 11,000 people); it has total of 28 bedrooms which is substantially lower than in comparative areas across Northern Ireland.

8.2.2 There appears to be a clear gap for a hotel but yet the area does not have one that fits its profile. It appears as if market failure is an issue here in relation to the quantum of hotel bed spaces available and government support is likely to be required to assist the private sector in investing in such a facility; the extent of that intervention is unquantified but in the absence of some sort of stimulus package to encourage this investment, the development of a hotel in Downpatrick may still be a long time away.

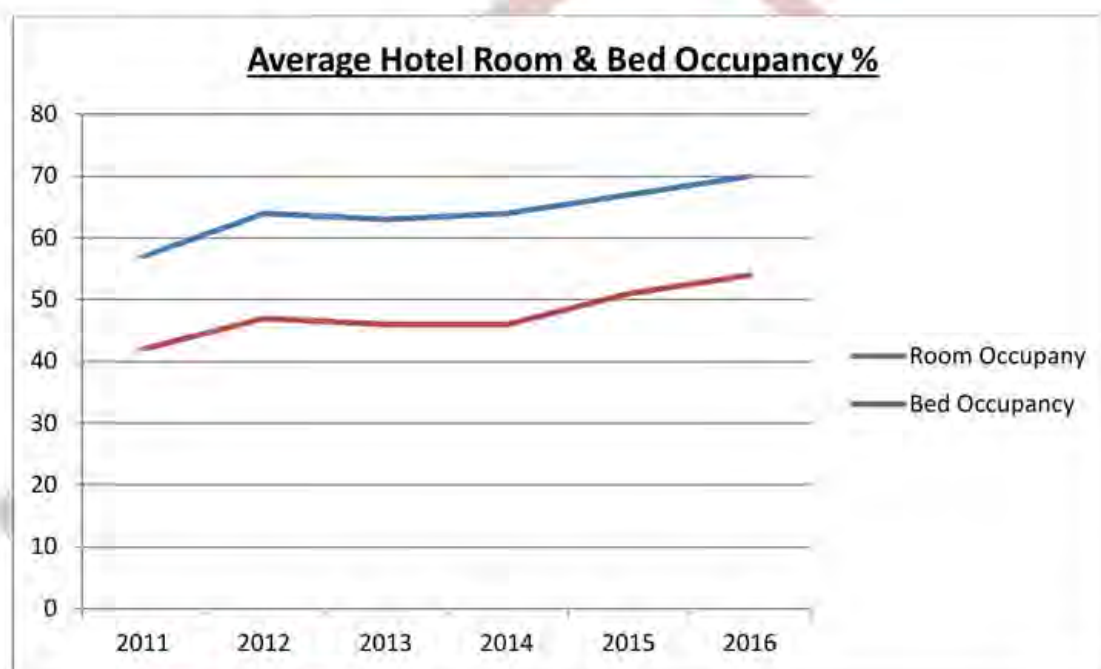
8.2.3 Whilst market failure appears to exist, there is a need to take cognisance of existing private sector operators in this sector, so that whatever investment is made by Government (if any) does not result in displacement of activity and revenue from existing provision.

9.0 WHAT TYPE OF HOTEL IS NEEDED IN DOWNPATRICK?

9.1 The preceding analysis indicates clearly that there is a gap in the market for the provision of a Hotel in the area. This section provides an assessment of what type of hotel should be provided, should this project be advanced.

General Statistics on Hotels

9.2 The hotel statistics released and published by The Department of the Economy indicates a consistent growth trend in the average bed and room occupancy across the Hotel sector in Northern Ireland from 2011 to 2016. The actual statistics per month are summarised overleaf. The following chart summarises those annualised data for each year:



9.2.1 The table points to a consistently healthy hotel sector across Northern Ireland in terms of average occupancy rates.

9.2.2 In terms of the occupancy rates of hotels by District (see table overleaf), Newry, Mourne & Down District's occupancy rates have been relatively static since 2011 at approximately 53% to 57%, with some movements up and down during these years.

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Average Hotel Occupancy in NI (Room & Beds)												
	2016		2015		2014		2013		2012		2011	
	Occupancy Rate											
	Room	Bed	Room	Bed	Room	Bed	Room	Bed	Room	Bed	Room	Bed
January	41%	30%	49%	36%	48%	30%	43%	28%	42%	31%	40%	28%
February	58%	45%	61%	48%	59%	36%	54%	41%	54%	39%	51%	36%
March	62%	49%	65%	47%	55%	40%	53%	42%	56%	41%	52%	36%
April	68%	53%	70%	52%	67%	46%	59%	43%	67%	52%	55%	42%
May	74%	56%	76%	58%	71%	49%	68%	49%	68%	52%	60%	43%
June	82%	58%	79%	58%	73%	54%	77%	53%	77%	55%	68%	50%
July	84%	70%	73%	59%	72%	54%	74%	51%	75%	59%	64%	50%
August	88%	72%	81%	65%	81%	60%	82%	63%	81%	64%	71%	57%
September	n/a	n/a	74%	54%	73%	52%	74%	49%	75%	52%	66%	47%
October	n/a	n/a	64%	48%	64%	47%	68%	48%	64%	45%	61%	43%
November	n/a	n/a	56%	41%	62%	43%	60%	43%	57%	39%	53%	39%
December	n/a	n/a	51%	41%	49%	37%	49%	38%	50%	36%	46%	35%
Average	70%	54%	67%	51%	64%	46%	63%	46%	64%	47%	57%	42%

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Average Annual Hotel Occupancy by District in Northern Ireland (Room & Bed)										
	2015		2014		2013		2012		2011	
	Room	Bed	Room	Bed	Room	Bed	Room	Bed	Room	Bed
Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council	61%	44%	58%	41%	50%	35%	50%	36%	47%	32%
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council	55%	37%	56%	38%	54%	33%	44%	28%	49%	34%
Belfast City Council	77%	60%	74%	51%	72%	55%	73%	55%	63%	47%
Causeway Coast & Glens District Council	59%	38%	59%	39%	58%	39%	59%	38%	57%	38%
Derry City & Strabane District Council	59%	47%	60%	46%	68%	46%	61%	45%	61%	45%
Fermanagh & Omagh District Council	59%	49%	59%	49%	58%	44%	65%	51%	55%	46%
Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Mid & East Antrim Borough Council	64%	51%	62%	49%	53%	41%	56%	46%	47%	35%
Mid Ulster District Council	48%	37%	47%	33%	42%	31%	46%	32%	45%	34%
Newry, Mourne & Down District Council	55%	43%	52%	40%	59%	42%	57%	44%	53%	42%
Ards & North Down Borough Council	54%	44%	56%	44%	55%	39%	53%	41%	49%	38%

Occupancy Rates by Hotel Classification

- 9.3 The published Hotel statistics indicate that the higher the classification (i.e. Star rating), the higher the room occupancy rate tends to be. For example, the average occupancy for a 4-Star hotel in Northern Ireland in 2015 was 68% (it was only 60% in 2011) whilst the average occupancy for 3-Star and 2-Star hotels was 63% and 47% respectively. The table below summarises the key published statistics:

Hotel Occupancy by Classification in Northern Ireland (from 2011 to 2015)										
	2015		2014		2013		2012		2011	
	Occupancy Rates									
	Room	Bed	Room	Bed	Room	Bed	Room	Bed	Room	Bed
4 STAR	68%	52%	68%	50%	68%	50%	66%	51%	60%	45%
3 STAR	63%	47%	59%	40%	58%	40%	56%	39%	56%	39%
2 STAR	*	*	47%	34%	42%	31%	46%	34%	42%	29%
1 STAR	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

*Sample size too small.

- 9.3.1 The table above would indicate that any proposed new hotel for the Downpatrick area would try to establish a minimum 3-Star rating to ensure a reasonably high level of occupancy, with lower costs compared to a 4 star hotel (e.g. a 4-star hotel in 2015 achieved only a 5% greater level of room occupancy compared to a 3-star hotel). Inevitably, the consumer perceives a higher value being placed on the star ratings, but whether an extra star would justify the significantly higher investment remains to be seen.

Hotel Occupancy by Size

- 9.4 In general terms, larger hotels appear to be in a position to achieve higher occupancy levels; this may be the result of the fact that most of the larger hotels are in Belfast and obtain a significant footfall or it could mean a perceived value being placed by the consumer upon hotels with a high volume of rooms.

Hotel Occupancy By Size of Establishment in Northern Ireland (from 2011 to 2015)										
	2015		2014		2013		2012		2011	
	Room	Bed	Room	Bed	Room	Bed	Room	Bed	Room	Bed
less than 25	50%	36%	47%	35%	46%	33%	48%	35%	43%	30%
26-50	59%	45%	58%	45%	52%	35%	55%	39%	50%	35%
51-100	65%	50%	64%	48%	65%	45%	63%	45%	58%	41%
more than 100	74%	56%	71%	49%	71%	53%	71%	55%	62%	48%

Downpatrick Hotel

Draft Report for Discussion

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Feasibility Study - Report

9.4.1 What is clear from the data contained in the above table is that there is a very low occupancy level for hotels with less than 25 rooms (especially in relation to bed occupancy).

Hotel Occupancy by Price-Band

9.5 The table below provides a range of statistical data in relation to the occupancy level of hotels by their charging structure.

Hotel Occupancy by Price Band										
	2015		2014		2013		2012		2011	
	Room	Bed	Room	Bed	Room	Bed	Room	Bed	Room	Bed
less than £40	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
£40-£49.99	59%	41%	58%	39%	57%	42%	52%	36%	47%	31%
£50-£59.99	64%	48%	69%	51%	62%	45%	57%	45%	58%	46%
£60 or more	68%	52%	65%	46%	65%	46%	66%	49%	59%	44%

9.5.2 It is interesting to note that the consumer appears to be less sensitive to the price bands (at the upper levels) compared to the perceived quality or its size. The occupancy data above demonstrate that a room priced in the £50 to £60 price band actually surpassed the 'over £60' price band in 2014 and is generally reasonably closely aligned to the higher price bracket occupancy in all other years. In all cases, however, the occupancy of the £40-£50 per room price band performs consistently worse than the other two price bands and this must be factored into any decision for a potential hotel in Downpatrick.

Summary

9.6.1 Whilst there is no specific existing published statistical data, which profile the entire range of visitors to the Downpatrick area, there is strong anecdotal evidence that suggests that a high proportion of them are currently day-trippers and there is a real challenge to convert them to over-night stays. The only entity that carried out an audience profile is the Down Museum, but this was a very specific audience and would not necessarily represent the typical visitor that would pass-through Downpatrick on a consistent basis, nor would any hotel be likely to capture overnight stay business from the vast majority of the Museum's customer bases.

9.6.2 Discussions with the director one of the major tourist products in the area (The Saint Patrick Centre) revealed that circa 800 coach tours visit the centre annually and normally it is not in a position to offer any package deal to the tour companies (usually tour buses carry 60 people). As a direct result of no accommodation being

available in the area, tourists are opting to stay elsewhere (as booked by the tour operator) resulting in the vast majority of visits to the area being categorised as 'day-trippers'. There is no current opportunity to try and convert these 800 coach tours to pencil Downpatrick in as a stop-over as part of their Ireland Tour. The director was of the firm belief that if a hotel of a reasonable quality (**minimum 3-star**) was available, he could begin to offer package deals to the tour operators and secure over-night stays in Downpatrick. He was also of the opinion that the Hotel needs to be in a position to accommodate a full coach, which suggest that a **50-60 bedroom hotel would be required to facilitate coach tour requests.**

- 9.6.3** Discussions with Downpatrick Racecourse revealed a similar situation. They are not in any position to offer overnight horse-racing packages. It has plans to commence and grow a Downpatrick Racing Festival and a range of international events and other events such as concerts etc. The manager of the recourse felt that **the hotel should be, at the very least, a 3 star standard** for the type of clientele that would be involved in their packaged deals. The manager wasn't particularly prescriptive about what size the hotel should be.
- 9.6.4** Based on the data analysed on hotel room and bed occupancy under many guises and on the type of visitor that is currently frequented Downpatrick, **it appears that a Hotel with either a 3-Star or 4-Star rating represents the best opportunity to achieve a higher level of occupancy and, therefore, better chance of business survival and growth.** With considerably less capital expenditure required to provide a 3 star offering (and occupancy levels are quite high for this rating of hotel), **it is recommended that a 3 start hotel represents the most prudent approach.**
- 9.6.5** The actual type of a hotel to be developed (i.e. a conference centre type vis-à-vis a boutique hotel etc.) is a function of other factors, such as site availability (which may be a constraining factor) and, finally, the desires of the private operator as to what type of hotel fits his/her strategic vision for the area and the relevant business profile.

10.0 SITE ANALYSIS AND ASSESSMENT

10.1 A number of sites have been identified as potentially capable of accommodating a Hotel in Downpatrick. Given the recommendation in this report is that the demand is pointing towards **a Hotel of a minimum 3-Star Standard, with 50-60 bedroom capacity**, this forms the basis of the 'over-arching criteria' to be used to select the site most suitable to accommodate a proposed hotel in Downpatrick.

10.2 In addition to this over-arching criteria there are other core selection criteria that need to be used in assessing the suitability of sites/properties that have been suggested in this study. The following criteria should be used in the assessment of all sites/properties to be considered:

- (i) Site is capable of accommodating a 50-60 bedroom hotel.
- (ii) The Hotel to a minimum of a 3-Star Standard.
- (iii) The site is available for acquisition/development.
- (iv) The site does not have major planning issues (or potential planning problems).
- (v) Be within reasonable proximity to Downpatrick Town (i.e. within 1½ mile).
- (vi) Suitable and appropriate access to car-parking on site or within close distance to location.
- (vii) Suitable infrastructure exists at the location (i.e. street lighting, pavements, safe road etc).

Individual Site/Property Assessment

10.3 The following paragraphs provide an assessment of the available sites against the assessment criteria listed in paragraph 10.2

- Site 1: The Former Down Hospital Site:
- Site 2: The Down High School Site:
- Site 3: The Site of the Former Abbey Lodge Hotel:
- Site 4: Old Down Business Centre on the Saul Road:
- Site 5: The Social Services Building at Lower Market Street:
- Site 6: The Old Council Buildings On Strangford Road:

- Site 7: The Vacated Northern Bank Property:
- Site 8: The Vacated Police Station:
- Site 9: A Collection of Disused Properties on Church Street:
- Site 10: Some Properties on English Street:
- Site 11: The Site at Corner of Church Street/Scotch Street:
- Site 12: The Property to the Rear of Denvir's Hotel (for expansion by Denvir's):
- Site 13: The Custom's House, English Street:
- Site 14: Grove Shopping Centre, Market Street:
- Site 15: Former Telephone Exchange at Church Street.

Agenda Item:	
Report to:	Enterprise Regeneration and Tourism Committee
Subject:	Former Downpatrick PSNI Station
Date:	Monday 8 May 2017
Reporting Officer:	Marie Ward, Director Enterprise, Regeneration & Tourism
Contact Officer:	Jonathan McGilly, Assistant Director, Enterprise Employment & Regeneration

Decisions Required

To consider & agree Recommendations outlined at Section 3 of this Report

1.0	<p>Purpose and Background</p> <p>In late 2016, PSNI notified public bodies of their intention to dispose of the former PSNI Station in Downpatrick. Within the context of the Downpatrick Masterplan and other related work this site offers opportunity for major town centre regeneration and is one of the few remaining vacant sites in Downpatrick.</p>
2.0	<p>Key Issues</p> <p>PSNI still intend to sell the site on the open market in 2017/18 financial year if no Public Authority expresses an interest to purchase the site.</p> <p>This site, along with the adjacent Council owned car park offer significant opportunity in partnership with the Department for Communities and possibly Transport NI to carry out a feasibility study on the site and run a development brief exercise. Council Officers have met with Department for Communities and Transport NI to explore how we could move forward with the site. It was agreed the potential uses for the site needed a lot more development work to enable any of the Agencies to purchase the site. Given PSNI's desire to sell the asset, DFC, TNI and Council met with PSNI and they are prepared to give the 3 parties until September 2017 to carry out a more detailed analysis of the site and the options, and if a feasible option exists, to develop a business case to justify the purchase of the site with the view to doing a Development Brief on the site in partnership with TNI & DfC.</p>
	<p>Recommendations</p> <p>1. NMDDC commission Consultants to carry out a feasibility study/options appraisals (to include valuation) on the site to include Council owned adjacent car park and, if required, develop the business case to justify purchase of the site and carry out a Development Brief on the extended site.</p>
4.0	<p>Resource Implications</p> <p>£15 - £20,000</p>
5.0	<p>Equality and Good Relations implications</p> <p>Fully Considered</p>

6.0	Appendices Not Applicable
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Agenda Item:	Slieve Gullion Forest Park – Improvements in Visitor Facilities
Report to:	Economic Regeneration and Tourism Committee
Subject:	As per agenda item
Date:	8 May 2017
Reporting Officer:	Marie Ward
Contact Officer:	Michelle Boyle

Decisions Required

1. To note timetable for implementation of capital investment programme
2. Council will undertake to investigate options for visiting the site such as booking

1.0

Purpose and Background

The Council provides a 4 star visitor attraction at Slieve Gullion Forest Park. The Council aspires to achieve 5 star and are working to achieve this. The site attracts circa 350,000 visitors per annum. The Council recognises the limitations in the current sites services and are implementing a programme of investment to enhance the facilities to meet visitor demands.

2.0

Key Issues

To meet visitor demands the Council have agreed a capital investment programme during 17/18 to provide new toilet facilities and additional parking which have been identified as key requirements to improve the visitor experience.

The Council have submitted a Planning application for a new amenity building which will provide male/female toilets . tourism information provision, attendants office and storage. Through consultation with various agencies an acceptable building design has been agreed and it envisaged planning permission will be achieved by June 2017. The new amenity building will be completed within this financial year.

The Parking provision at the site will be expanded within the existing curtilage of lands that the Council lease from Forest Service. The design has been finalised and consultation with held key agencies such as the Environment dept has been completed. Discussions are progressing on requirements for screening to the site and land requirements. Whilst formal approval is sought for parking improvements, interim temporary parking has been provided on the site, providing an additional 80 spaces. This temporary provision has proved effective at facilitating a large number of visitors accessing the site over the Easter period. Planning permission will be sought to formalise this parking. Outside the site boundary, Council has provided cones along the Wood Road to discourage visitors

	<p>from parking and obstructing 2 way traffic.</p> <p>Whilst the temporary parking improvements have been key to improving the visitor flow within the Park, outside the site on the public road is proving challenging in terms of visitors parking along road verges and causing disruption to local residents. As a public road, Council have no remit for managing traffic however recognise the increase in usage is resulting from the Forest Park. Whilst no simple solutions exists to address this issue on the public road, Council will undertake to investigate options for visiting the site such as booking which is operated at other sites.</p>
3.0	<p>Recommendations</p> <p>To note timetable for implementation of capital investment programme</p> <p>Council undertake to investigate options for visiting the site such as booking visits</p>
4.0	<p>Resource Implications</p> <p>Ongoing capital budget associated with toilet block provision and parking at Slieve Gullion Forest Park is included in the budget in this financial year 17/18</p>
5.0	<p>Equality Assessment</p> <p>Consideration will be taken as part of project design</p>
6.0	<p>Appendices</p> <p>N//a</p>

Agenda Item:	
Report to:	Enterprise Regeneration and Tourism Committee
Subject:	Revamp of main exhibition galleries at Newry and Mourne Museum
Date:	8th May 2017
Reporting Officer:	Marie Ward, Director Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism
Contact Officer:	Noreen Cunningham, Museum Curator

Decisions Required

That the Committee approves the request seeking permission to;

- Go to tender

1.0 Purpose and Background

Newry and Mourne Museum tells the story of the Newry and its hinterland from earliest settlement to present day. Since opening in March 2007 a number of key items have been acquired that are important to the narrative of the area. While some new acquisitions have been used in temporary exhibitions, the majority have never been displayed, and the revamp provides the opportunity to exhibit them.

The move from the Sean Hollywood Arts Centre in 2007 to a standalone premises has been a tremendous success. The Museum service has significantly expanded over the ten years since opening, with an increase in visitor numbers, schools visits and donations from the local community.

Council funding now provides the opportunity to continue this development with an update and redesign of the galleries, which takes into account the continuous evaluation and consultation with stakeholders over the last ten years.

2.0 Key Issues

The revamp which will cost £120,000 will totally redesign the layout of the three main galleries and include more museum cases, new exhibition graphics, lighting and museum interactive. Tenders will need to be issued for the exhibition design, fit-out and installation. The redesigned galleries will enhance the learning potential of the displays for school workshops and a new layout will facilitate larger tour groups.

3.0 Recommendations

That the Committee gives approval for tenders to be issued.

4.0 Resource Implications

A sum of £120,000 has been allocated in the Capital budget for 2017 - 2018

5.0 Equality and Good Relations implications

This project which presents the shared history of the region will have a positive impact on equality and good relations, continuing the Museum's aim to be a neutral venue for casual visitors, local groups and tour groups from other districts.

6.0 Appendices

None

Report to:	Enterprise Regeneration and Tourism Committee
Subject:	Attendance at the Royal International Air Tattoo on Sunday 16 July in the Cotswolds, England
Date:	Monday 8 May 2017
Reporting Officer:	Marie Ward, Director Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism
Contact Officer:	Mark Mohan, Senior Tourism Initiatives Manager

Decisions Required

- Approval for chairperson of Council or Chairperson of ERT committee and 2 event team staff to attend the Royal International Air Tattoo on Sunday 16 July, in the Cotswolds, England

1.0 Purpose and Background

The Festival of Flight in Newcastle is one of Council's 'Giant Adventure' events attracting in the region of 100,000 people to the District in August each year, generating circa £2.8m for the local economy annually. As one of the council's key flagship events there is an aspiration to develop this event along with our other 'Giant Adventure' events as major visitor attractors to the District and in line with our tourism strategy.

Key Issue

Following a recent meeting with the Council's Chief Executive, Events Development Officer and the RAF it was recommended that a team from Newry, Mourne and Down District Council visit the Royal International Air Tattoo on 16 July as part of a learning visit.

The Air Tattoo, attracting 154,000 visitors is one of the UK's premier outdoor events, with an extravaganza of entertainment for all the family. Alongside the thrilling 7.5 hour flying action, visitors are treated to non-stop entertainment on the ground. As an event it is very commercial oriented in terms of how it is delivered and presents a real opportunity for a council delegation to learn about how this airshow has become the successful event it now is, and how we as a council might learn from it in terms of our Festival of Flight event, and its future development

3.0 Recommendations

- Approval for chairperson of Council or Chairperson of ERT committee and 2 event team staff to attend the Royal International Air Tattoo on Sunday 16 July, in the Cotswolds, England

4.0 Resource Implications

Attendance at the Air Tattoo for 3 people will cost approximately £1200 which includes flights and 1 night accommodation. There is provision in the current budget to facilitate the delivery of this learning journey.

5.0	Equality and Good Relations implications Events portray a very positive message in terms of our equality and good relations. They assist greatly in bringing people together from across the district and all our communities within, and showcase the District as a positive forward thinking destination and a good place to visit.
6.0	Appendices N/A

ACTIONS TRACKING UPDATE

ENTERPRISE REGENERATION AND TOURISM COMMITTEE

ITEM	SUBJECT	DECISION	REFERRED TO	ACTION TAKEN
		ERT – MONDAY 14 SEPTEMBER 2015		
ERT/117/2015	Transfer of Forest Assets	To approve recommendations contained in Report dated 12 October 2015 from G McGivern regarding the transfer of forest assets to Council. Council Officials to investigate establishing Community Development Trusts.	Ongoing	
ERT/118/2015	Annalong Harbour Stormgate	Council Officers proceed to prepare a joint funding bid for funding projects at both Annalong Harbour and Newcastle Harbour.	Ongoing	
		ERT – MONDAY 11 JANUARY 2016		
ERT/177/2016	Policy & Procedures Access to the Countryside in Newry Mourne & Down District Council	To note a policy document was currently being prepared on Access to the Countryside in the Newry Mourne & Down District Council area, as outlined in Report dated 21 December 2015 from Ms C Murphy and Ms Heather Wilson, Countryside/Rights of Way Officer. The policy document will be a framework for merging the differing policies within the legacy Councils and ensuring the Council's compliance with the implementation of the Access to the Countryside (NI) Order 1983. When the policy document is completed it will be brought to the Enterprise Regeneration & Tourism Committee for consideration in due course.	Work on going to complete the policy including seeking legal advice.	
		ERT – MONDAY 8 FEBRUARY 2016		

ERT/27/2016	Overflow Car Park Slieve Gullion Forest	CLOSED SESSION ITEM Further time be allocated to Council officials to seek alternative provision for an overflow car parking facility at Slieve Gullion Forest Park, which will meet the Council criteria for such a facility at this location.	Ongoing	
		ERT – MONDAY 14 MARCH 2016		
ERT/36/2016	Hotel Development	The Council commission site option appraisal and business case/appraisal for hotel provision in Downpatrick and Newcastle.	Work in Progress	
		ERT – MONDAY 13 JUNE 2016		
ERT/105/2016	Beaches – Newcastle and Warrenpoint	The Council submit a Marine Licence Application for Warrenpoint, Newcastle and Rostrevor.	Ongoing	
ERT/107/2016	Proposals re: Killeavey Castle	Closed Session Item To approve the recommendation contained in Report dated 13 June 2016 from Ms M Ward Director ERT, regarding proposals for Killeavey Castle, subject to satisfactory legal agreements, valuations and satisfactory grant approvals.	In progress	
		ERT – MONDAY 8 AUGUST 2016		
ERT/120/2016	Funding Derrymore House & Estate	(a) The Council prepares two funding applications for EU RDP Programme and Sport NI, for infrastructure investment in Derrymore House & Estate. (b) The Council re-allocates up to £10,000 from the existing budget of £50,000 reserved as match funding for the unsuccessful Space & Place to secure the technical assistance support required to prepare the two funding applications.	In progress	
ERT/122/2016	Masterplans	(a) Action Plans are tabled for discussion at relevant DEA Meeting to which all Councillors will be invited to attend.	Ongoing	

		<p>(b) Revised Action Plans following DEA consultation to be tabled at Council via ERT Meeting in September/October 2016.</p> <p>(c) Strategic Council Projects arising from the Plans be reported on via Strategic Projects Working Group.</p> <p>(d) All other projects be reported via ERT with a note of progress against each of the projects at (c) above.</p> <p>(e) Report to relevant DEAs every 6 months against progress on each of the Plans relevant to DEA.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Actioned</p> <p>Actioned</p>	
		ERT MONDAY 12 SEPTEMBER 2016		
ERT/136/2016	Newry Town Hall Schedule of Works	<p>(a) To close Newry Town Hall for Main Hall bookings from 15 May – 15 September 2017.</p> <p>(b) Mood Boards be produced to inform all groups and others of progress of works.</p> <p>(c) Meeting be convened at later date with Director of ERT, user groups and Theatre consultant, to inform them of proposed works.</p> <p>(d) Consultation process to begin in Autumn with Arts Groups/relevant bodies for Audience Development Strategy.</p>	Ongoing	
		ERT - MONDAY 10 OCTOBER 2016		
ERT/152/2016	Collaborative Agreement – Local Enterprise Agencies	(i) Newry Mourne & Down District Council enter into a Collaborative Agreement with Newry & Mourne Enterprise Agency (NMEA) and Down Business Centre (DBC) jointly when it is in	In progress	

		<p>Council's interest to engage both parties for the delivery of LED (Local Economic Development) function.</p> <p>(ii) This should be agreed for a one year period and reviewed at the end before any further commitment is entered into.</p> <p>(iii) Council agreed the Collaborative Agreement details subject to final legal advice.</p> <p>(iv) No specific value to be included in the Agreement but Council to establish value for money rates for key personnel to complete tasks and agree scope of work based on each individual arrangement.</p>		
ERT/155/2016	Tender re: Arts Culture Heritage Strategy & Action Plan	The Council tender for the Development of an Integrated Culture Arts & Heritage Strategy 2017 – 2021 and Action Plan 2017-2019 for Newry Mourne & Down District Council, as per Report dated 10 October 2016 from Mr J McGilly Assistant Director ERT.	In progress	
ERT/158/2016	Youth Golf Competition	To hold a Youth Golf Competition in April 2017 on the championship course at Royal County Down with a qualifier competition to be held at Ardglass Golf Club, as per Report dated 10 October 2016 from Ms T Mooney Assistant Tourism Development Officer.	In progress	
		ERT – MONDAY 14 NOVEMBER 2016		
ERT/169/2016	Derrymore Estate Partnership	(a) Council Officials to continue to progress the delivery of projects that seek to develop the recreational potential of Derrymore Estate.	In progress	

		<p>(b) Council to submit an application for Trail facility development to Sport NI before the deadline of February 2017, and if successful, to make available the required match funding towards this project of approximately £140,000 in 2017/18.</p> <p>(c) Council Officials to commence work on preparation and submission of a planning application for above project to ensure project delivery is not delayed if a Letter of Offer for funding is awarded.</p>		
ERT/172/2016	Castlewellan Forest Park	<p>(a) To procure and pay facilitators for the purposes of consultation workshops, events and road shows.</p> <p>(b) To plan and hold a number of consultation workshops, events and road shows.</p>	In progress	
ERT/173/2016	Membership – Connect Programme	Agreed to engage with Catalyst Inc via the Connect Programme, on a 12 month silver membership programme at a cost of £2,000 pa, as per Report dated 14 November 2016 from Mr J McGilly Assistant Director of ERT.	In progress	
ERT/175/2016	Downpatrick PSNI Station	Agreed the Council support Downpatrick Community Collective Group in their efforts to secure the site via Community Asset Transfer and Council to offer advice and support to the Group to develop the initiative, as per Report dated 14 November 2016 from Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director of Enterprise, Regeneration & Tourism.	In progress	
ERT/176/2016	Sean Hollywood Arts Centre Café Franchise	(a) The Council to not proceed on the basis as outlined in Point 2.0 for the reasons as outlined in Point 3.0 in Report dated 14 November 2016	In progress	

		<p>from Ms J Turley Facilities Administrator.</p> <p>(b) Council Officials to enter back into negotiations regarding the Café franchise at Sean Hollywood Arts Centre.</p>		
ERT/177/2016	NIRD P Rural Tourism Scheme Slieve Gullion Forest Park	<p>(a) Submit an application for the funding deficit to potential funders, ie, Heritage Lottery Fund, when the Slieve Gullion Forest Park Economic Appraisal is complete.</p> <p>(b) Invite to tender to prepare a planning application for the project, assess tenders, appoint supplier using the MEAT process.</p> <p>(c) Submit planning application for project.</p> <p>(d) Proceed to tender the proposed Augmented Reality Project.</p> <p>(e) Submit the round two application to NIRD P 2014-2020 Priority 6 Rural Tourism Scheme.</p>	In progress	
ERT/178/2016	Caravan and Campsite Management	<p>(a) To agree a joint process between Council and Forest Service to appoint external expertise to prepare the Business Rationale and Specification to seek competent providers for the management of Tollymore Castlewellan and Kilbroney Park Caravan/Camping provision with the option to consider some additional tourism recreational services which would enhance the tourism offering.</p> <p>(b) To revert to Council with the completed Business Rationale and Specification prior to progressing to seek Expression of Interest.</p>	In progress	
ERT/179/2016	Slieve Croob Walking Trails	Agreed that both of the Council's Countryside	In progress	

		<p>Access Officers will have input into the study being carried out by Outdoor Recreation NI regarding a Community Trails Plan to examine potential trails within the Slieve Croob and Mourne District Electoral Area, as per Report dated 14 November 2016 from Ms H Wilson, Countryside Access Officer regarding Community Trails Plan to examine potential trails within Slieve Croob and Mourne DEA.</p>		
ERT/180/2016	2017 Events	<p>(a) To approve the schedule of Council tourism events and dates which will enable the official launch of the events to be held in January 2017 which will provide time for the effective organisation and development of the events and allow the businesses in the District the opportunity to build packages around these core events.</p> <p>(b) To approve the schedule of Signature and Major Events to be supported through the events budget 2017.</p> <p>Also agreed Council Officials to arrange a meeting with the organising Committee of the Maiden of the Mourne Festival to discuss plans for the festival and identify how the Council can provide assistance.</p>	Completed	
ERT/184/2016	Maintenance – Struell Wells	<p>This issue would be reported back to the ERT Committee following completion of discussions between Historic Environment Division and Council.</p>	In progress	
ERT/185/2016	Update RDP Village Plans	<p>Note the process undertaken to date in Preparation for submitting an application for funding to the Mourne Gullion Lecale Rural Development Partnership for new and updated</p>	In progress	

		Village Plans, as outlined in Report dated 14 November 2016 from Mr J McGilly Assistant Director of Enterprise Regeneration & Tourism.		
ERT/186/2016	Adventure Tourism Project	Note that Newry Mourne & Down District Council, in partnership with relevant stakeholders, will submit the Growth for Adventure Tourism Entrepreneurs application to the Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme by the closing date of Friday 30 November 2016, as outlined in Report dated 14 November 2016 from Mr M Patterson Enterprise Development Officer.	In progress	
		ERT – MONDAY 12 DECEMBER 2016		
ERT/191/2016	Coastal Communities Fund	(a) Advance the Coastal Communities Fund application to Stage 2 of the process (b) The Council to go to tender for the appointment of a delivery agent, if successful at Stage 2 of the process.	Ongoing	
ERT/194/2016	Armstrong Hut Ballykinler Camp	(a) To approve the development of initial plans and to seek costs for the project to reconstruct an Armstrong Hut from Ballykinler Camp at Down County Museum in order that should funding become available from Peace IV, or an alternative source, the project can proceed. (b) Progress reports regarding the project to reconstruct an Armstrong Hut from Ballykinler Camp at Down County Museum, be tabled at the Enterprise Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting in due course.	Ongoing	
ERT/195/2016	Tourism Travel Trade Opportunities	Council to host part of a drinks reception for ITOA in January 2017 at a cost in the region of £4,000.	Ongoing	

ERT/196/2016	Tourism Strategy 2017 - 2021	<p>(a) To adopt the Tourism Strategy 2017-2021.</p> <p>(b) To consider the Summary Action Plan for 2017/2018 and agree the review of the ERT Directorate Business Plan in early 2017.</p> <p>(c) To arrange an official launch of the Tourism Strategy in early 2017.</p>	<p>Actioned</p> <p>This will completed and submitted in February to ERT</p> <p>Launch date confirmed as 21 February.</p>	
ERT/197/2016	Land at Slieve Croob – Walking Trails	<p>(a) No further action be taken by Council regarding The development of walking trails and acquisition of and in Slieve Croob, until such times as the study being carried out by ORNI regarding a community trails plan for Slieve Croob and Mourne DEA, is completed.</p> <p>(b) An update report regarding the development of Walking trails in Slieve Croob to be tabled at a future meeting of the ERT Committee.</p>	<p>ORNI anticipate that a final draft of the report will be available by the end of January/early February for consideration by the Countryside Officers. Full report to be tabled at future Committee meeting</p>	
ERT/198/2016	DOE Environment Fund – Ring of Gullion	<p>To accept and return the Letter of Acceptance form from NIEA in respect of an offer of funding from the Environment Fund for 2017/18 for Strangford Lough, Lecale & Down Coast AONB, Ring of Gullion LPS nad Ring of Gullion AONB.</p>	<p>Grant Acceptance form signed and posted to NIEA</p>	
ERT/199/2016	NI Chamber Membership	<p>The Council join NI Chamber of Commerce for an initial 12month period with review thereafter.</p>	<p>Work in progress</p>	
ERT/200/2016	Overseas Results for Newry Mourne & Down District Council Area	<p>The Council enter into an Agreement with Overseas Results Ltd to run a programme of export sourcing for 20 companies in the Newry Mourne & Down</p>	<p>Work in progress</p>	

		District Council area.		
		JANUARY 2017		
ERT/004/2017	NI Business Start Programme (NIPSP)	To note that NMDDC have received and signed a Legal Agreement for the NI Business Start Up Programme and will also accept and sign the associated Letter of Offer to be received from Invest NI, in line with the details of the Programme as outlined under Option 1 of the Project Assessment, and detailed in the Legal Agreement.	J McGilly	Awaiting final Letter of Offer
ERT/005/2017	Marine Taskforce	<p>A) NMDDC should respond to DAERA consultation to support the designation of Kilclief and Ballyhornan as EU Bathing Waters as proposed by DAERA and seek to have Killough reconsidered for designation in 2017.</p> <p>B) The Council should allocate resources to the designated sites to cover the one off capital costs of signage and the ongoing annual costs of £540. The Council should keep the health and safety requirements at these sites under review, including the potential requirement for lifeguards.</p> <p>C) The Council should pursue the potential for using community lifeguards and volunteers at these sites and other amenity beaches.</p> <p>D) Community engagement with communities in Kilclief, Ballyhornan and Killough with litter collection and shore activities included in the AONB Management Action Plan.</p>		
ERT/006/2017	International Ice Swimming Association Bid	A) The Council to provide a letter of support to the Camlough Lake Water Festival (CLWF) to host	M Boyle	Awaiting update from CLWF on

		<p>the International Ice Swimming Association (IISA) World Championships 2019 in Newry Canal or Camlough Lake.</p> <p>B) ERT and AHC Departments will work in partnership with CLWF Festival to facilitate this project.</p>		plans to progress
ERT/007/2017	Mooring Licence – Newcastle Harbour	<p>A) The allocation of Mooring Licences at Newcastle Harbour to be a 3 yearly process to be carried out in 2017 and continued for 2018 and 2019.</p> <p>B) Mooring charges for 2017 to be approved and approved on a yearly basis thereafter, on a basis of a 5% increase per annum.</p> <p>C) No pontoon provision at Newcastle Harbour during the summer.</p>	M McKeown	Mooring allocation process to commence for a 3 year basis
ERT/008/2017	Lighting of Holm Oak Tree – Kilbroney Park Rostrevor	To take no action at present in respect of the provision of lighting at the Holm Oak Tree in Kilbroney Park Rostrevor, as the Council currently have no budget in place for this expenditure.	M McKeown	New costing obtained – Tree lighting provided
ERT/009/2017	SEA FLAG 2 Programme – Union Priority 4	Authority be granted to Council Officers to proceed with the submission of a bid to DAERA to deliver the new round of funding and to proceed with procurement of the necessary consultancy work.	J McGilly	Awaiting DAERA call for proposals.
ERT/011/2017	Kilbroney Park Café – Licence Agreement	<p>A) To advertise the Licence for the renewal of the Kilbroney Park Café for a 3 year period.</p> <p>B) To provide a new Licence Agreement to the existing operator at the Kilbroney Park Café to operate the Café from 1 February 2017 – 30 September 2017 to facilitate the procurement exercise to complete.</p> <p>C) To undertake a valuation to establish a Licence</p>	M Boyle	Ongoing

		Fee reflective of the current market for the licence period 1 February 2017 – 30 September 2017.		
		FEBRUARY 2017		
ERT/027/2017	District Masterplans	Subject to extensive consultation, the Council adopt and implement the 4 No. Masterplans for the District with quarterly review and date provided to the ERT Committee and bi-annual reports provided to DEAs.	J McGilly	Ongoing. Report on progress will go to May ERT mtg
ERT/028/2017	Horse Riding – Castlewellan Park	The Council to undertake the management of the identified interim horse riding trails in Castlewellan Forest Park in the short term, pending the outcome of the ORNI study into wider horse riding in the Mourne forests, taking into account the identified key issues.	H Wilson	Completed
ERT/030/2017	Balmoral Show 2017	Agreed Council be represented at Balmoral Show 2017 and take a stand at this event, as per market activities.	M Boyle	Arrangements ongoing
ERT/032/2017	Camlough Lake – Task & Finish	<p>A) To investigate provision of temporary facilities for events for 2017.</p> <p>B) To accept 1 No. representative from the new Camlough Angling group to be represented on the Committee.</p> <p>C) The site meeting scheduled for February 2017 be changed to March 2017.</p> <p>D) A small group to review art feature on site.</p>	M Boyle	<p>Ongoing investigations</p> <p>Costing being obtained to determine if feasible</p>
ERT/033/2017	Life Guard Services	To approve continuation of the Agreement with RNLI for provision of a Life Guard Service for Cranfield, Murlough and Tyrella beaches for period 2017-2021, subject to completion of legal formalities.	S Boyle	All changes to draft document agreed with RNLI

ERT/035/2017	Athletics NI - European Cross Country Championships	Agreed Council Officials in the ERT Department in partnership with Council Officials in the AHC Department, liaise with Athletics NI and the relevant stakeholders, to consider the potential for a bid to be made by Athletics NI and UK Athletics to the European Athletics to host the European Cross Country Championships to be held in Kilbroney Park Rostrevor.	M Patterson/M Mohan	Initial conversations have taken place. Communications ongoing	99
MARCH 2017					
ERT/043/2017	Service Level Agreements 2017-2018	<p>To note the following Service Level Agreements for 2017-2018:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) NMDDC and Mourne Heritage Trust 2) NMDDC and NIBSUP (Interim Programme Delivery) 3) NMDDC and NMEA (Social Enterprise Programme) 4) NMDDC and ENI (Exploring Enterprise 3) 5) NMDDC and Youth Action (Get Set for Work) 6) NMDDC and East Border Region 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) M Ward 2) J McGilly 3) J McGilly 4) J McGilly 5) J McGilly 	Completed	

		<p>7) NMDDC and University of Ulster (Sectorial Analysis)</p> <p>8) NMDDC and Outdoor Recreation NI</p> <p>9) NMDDC and Royal National Lifeboat Institution (Tyrella; Murlough; Cranfield)</p> <p>10) NMDDC and National Trust</p> <p>11) NMDDC and St Patrick's Visitor Centre</p> <p>12) NMDDC and Down Railway</p>	<p>6) J McGilly</p> <p>7) J McGilly</p> <p>8) M Ward</p> <p>9) S Boyle</p> <p>10) S Boyle</p> <p>11) M Mohan</p> <p>12) M Mohan</p>	
ERT/044/2017	Purple Status Flag (Newcastle)	<p>Council Officers work with the private sector in the Newcastle area to establish a Purple Flag Working Group and that if agreement is reached with the businesses, that an application is submitted in January 2018 for Purple Flag Status.</p> <p>Councillor B Quinn to be provided with a copy of the Purple Flag assessment for Newry.</p>	M Quinn	Meeting to be held in Newcastle after Easter holiday to agree formation of Purple Flag group.
ERT/045/2017	Autism Initiatives NI	Council Officers work with the private sector in the Newcastle area to promote and develop the concept to have Newcastle awarded the status as	M Quinn	Meeting arranged with Autism

		First Autism Friendly town in Northern Ireland.		Initiatives NI and Newcastle Business representatives for 29 March 2017. Workshop to be held for Businesses/Cllrs end April 2017
ERT/045/2017	Autism Initiatives NI	Council Officers work with the private sector in the Newcastle area to promote and develop the concept to have Newcastle awarded the status as First Autism Friendly town in Northern Ireland.	M Quinn	Meeting arranged with Autism Initiatives NI and Newcastle Business representatives for 29 March 2017. Workshop to be held for Businesses/Cllrs end April 2017
ERT/046/2017	Village Renewal	To accept the letter of offer from Mourne Gullion Lecale (MGL) Rural Development Partnership for funding in the sum of £51,375 with match funding requirement from Council in the sum of £20,000, which has been confirmed in 2017/18 Rate Estimates.	J McGilly/ A Smyth	Letter of Offer accepted and returned to MGL Lag. Project implementation underway
ERT/048/2017	Castlewellan Forest Park – Task & Finish Board	<p>a) The Report of the Café Conversion – The Heritage Potential of Castlewellan Forest Park, be shared with the public as a record of the information collated at the World Cafe Style Conversion Workshop which took place on 1 February 2017.</p> <p>b) To note that the Council cannot commit to implementing all of the suggestions/ideas that were recorded at the Workshop.</p>	S Keenan	The Castlewellan Task and Finish Project Board will discuss at the next meeting in April how they wish to make this document public ie via which

				platforms /press etc
ERT/049/2017	Castlewellan Forest Park – Recreation Forum	To establish a Castlewellan Forest Park Recreation Forum to provide a proactive channel for two way communication on interfaces between and issues impacting upon the various outdoor recreation activities in Castlewellan Forest Park, informing management approaches and acting as a forum in which to build mutual understanding and consensus among key users.	S Keenan	MHT will be facilitating this Forum, they hope to have an initial meeting of the forum in May /June 2017.
ERT/050/2017	Lease Agreement - Rath Turrett Site Warrenpoint	To renew the Lease for Rath Turrett Site Warrenpoint for a 5 year period at a nominal fee, on the basis of the terms and conditions similar to the previous lease, and payment of owner's reasonable legal fees.	M Ward/ B Magill SPR	Once ERT report has been approved at full Council, lease will be signed and sealed on 3 April 2017
ERT/051/2017	UNESCO Geopark	To engage with GSNI and initiate preparatory work to submit a new application for UNESCO Global Geopark.	M Boyle	In progress – Meeting pending with GSNI
ERT/052/2017	Mountain Bike Event	To support the Red Bull Foxhunt and Irish National Championships in Rostrevor and PSYCLE in Castlewellan.	M Boyle	In progress
ERT/053/2017	Camlough Lake Lighting Ducts	To approve an addition to the NI Water Rehabilitation Contract at Camlough Lake to include ducting.	M Boyle	In progress
ERT/054/2017	Tender Visitor Experience Plans	To issue a tender to appoint a company to undertake 2 No. Visitor Experience Plans for Mourne & Gullion and Mourne Coastal (Strangford Lough to Carlingford Lough, incorporating St Patrick) Ms M Boyle Tourism Development Officer to contact the relevant statutory agency following concerns raised by Councillor B Quinn regarding the urgent need for works to be carried out at all the tourist information signage in the District to cut back overgrowth and clean signs.	M Boyle	Tender Issued
ERT/056/2017	Sole Providers	To proceed to engage the services of the Big Telly Theatre Company for artists, materials, project management and programming solutions as	A McGill	Completed

		required, specifically their "Creative Shops" programme to support City of Merchants Festival in Newry up to £20,000.		
ERT/057/2017	Tender Wake the Giant City of Merchants	To issue 2 No. Tenders to appoint a company to undertake Story Development, facilitation and production services for Wake the Giant and City of Merchants festivals in 2017, at a cost of £40,000 each. To engage with Kilkeel Chamber of Commerce with regard to the involvement of Kilkeel in future events.	A McGill	Completed
		APRIL 2017 (To follow)		

Report to:	ERT Meeting
Date of Meeting:	May 2017
Subject:	Strangford Lough Marine Protected Area Management
Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):	Marie Ward, Director
Contact Officer (Including Job Title):	Caroline Nolan SLLP Manager

Decisions required:

To note only. When DAERA consult on their final version of the document the Council will be required to approve / provide comment.

1.0	Purpose and Background:
1.1	<p>The draft Strangford Lough Marine Protected Area Management Scheme has been produced by the SLLP Office on behalf of DAERA with input from relevant statutory bodies, including council officers and elected members on SLLP. A draft was provided to ERT in April.</p> <p>Final Draft attached.</p> <p>DAERA will review this document and produce their version later this year. That document will be issued to relevant authorities including local councils for formal consultation and adoption.</p>
2.0	Key issues:
2.1	<p>A previous draft of this document was provided to the April ERT meeting and there are no issues at this time.</p> <p>The final draft document is to note only.</p> <p>Strangford Lough Marine Protected Area (MPA), set in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), is one of the most important marine sites in the UK and Europe. Strangford Lough is part of the OSPAR network of internationally important sites and the European Natura 2000 Network. It is protected under international Conventions and Directives and UK policy and legislation.</p> <p>The Lough has an interconnected ecological system where the very varied patterns of tides, wave action, water quality, underlying geology, and location create the conditions for a complex mosaic of habitats and species. Over 2,000 marine species (75% of Northern Ireland's total) have been recorded here. Its coastal and marine species and habitats are tremendously important for biodiversity and are an important part of Northern Ireland's Natural Capital.</p> <p>The Strangford Lough Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Area, (SPA) lie at the heart of the MPA and cover most of its geographic area. These designations afford the highest level of protection to the related species and</p>

habitats (the Conservation Features) under European Directives and UK Legislation.

They place statutory responsibilities on public bodies, including Newry , Mourne and Down District Council to safeguard the nature conservation interests and ensure that any development or activity should not adversely affect them. It does not mean that activities cannot take place but it does mean that they must be planned and managed carefully.

All authorities must complete a Habitats Regulations Assessment before introducing or supporting any new plan or activity with the potential to affect the Conservation Features.

Authorities should also use the Precautionary Principle which means that a lack of full scientific evidence must not postpone action to protect the marine environment.

The MPA has seven Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs): Strangford Lough Parts 1, 2 and 3, Ballyquintin Point, Killard, part of Outer Ards ASSI and Sheepland Coast.

Strangford Lough is a Ramsar site for its waterfowl and wetland interest.

Unfortunately some of the Lough's key species and habitats are currently damaged or in decline because they have dropped below the target condition for the interest feature in terms of abundance, distribution and / or quality of that feature within the site.

The use of mobile fishing gear, ie commercial trawling and dredging for fish, has been banned in the Lough, under Fisheries Legislation, as it has been associated with serious damage to Horse Mussel communities on the seabed. To allow the Horse Mussel communities to recover a restricted zone has been introduced within which all activities with the potential to affect the seabed , including pot fishing, diving, anchoring and mooring, have been banned.

The invasive species, *Spartina* (cord grass) has taken over stretches of Atlantic Salt Meadow and areas of Mud and Sand Colonised by *Salicornia* and Other Annuals.

Perennial Vegetation of Stony Banks has been damaged or removed.

Some bird species are also in serious decline. Data from 2011-2015 shows Knot, Common Tern and Golden Plover to have fallen below the threshold for Favourable Condition. Problems affecting migratory birds may be encountered anywhere along the flyway migratory route and may be outside the scope of the Scheme. However, local measures must be taken where they can be applied. In the case of nesting Common Terns, habitat improvement, reducing disturbance, and protection against predators would help to improve fledgling success, but further study is needed to understand fully the causes and effects.

While restoration of features is a priority it is also important to ensure that the other features are maintained in favourable condition or are improved.

New or expanding socio-economic activity such as outdoor recreation or aquaculture has to be carefully assessed and planned so as to be compatible with the environmental designations. Climate change and associated increased

	<p>storminess and sea level rise are bringing additional challenges to management .</p> <p>The Management Scheme helps statutory bodies to meet their obligations and responsibilities with regard to the marine and coastal environment of Strangford Lough. It sets the framework through which activities can be managed, either voluntarily or through regulation, so as to protect the environment while allowing it to be used sustainably. It is not a statutory instrument, but an agreed approach to collaborative management between the statutory agencies and stakeholders.</p>
3.0	Recommendations:
3.1	To note and approve the draft Strangford Lough MPA Scheme and be aware that DAERA will be consulting the council, as a relevant authority, on their final version of this document in the coming months.
4.0	Resource implications
4.1	None
5.0	Equality and good relations implications:
5.1	None
6.0	Appendices: MPA Scheme attached.

STRANGFORD LOUGH MARINE PROTECTED AREA MANAGEMENT SCHEME 2017 -

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Strangford Lough Marine Protected Area (MPA), set in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), is one of the most important marine sites in the UK and Europe. Strangford Lough is part of the **OSPAR** network of internationally important sites and the European Natura 2000 Network (See Section 2.2). It is **protected under international Conventions and Directives and UK policy and legislation**.

The Lough has an **interconnected ecological system** where the very varied patterns of tides, wave action, water quality, underlying geology, and location create the conditions for a complex mosaic of habitats and species. Over 2,000 marine species (75% of Northern Ireland's total) have been recorded here. Its coastal and marine species and habitats are tremendously important for biodiversity and are an important part of Northern Ireland's Natural Capital.

- Vast mud and sandflats are the feeding grounds for internationally important numbers of overwintering birds.
- Strangford Lough attracts up to 80% of the Canadian population of pale bellied Brent geese through October / November.
- Huge flocks of migratory wildfowl and waders, often over 70,000 water birds, overwinter here
- The Lough's islands provide nest sites for terns that travel from as far away as the Antarctic and feed on small fish during the summer months.
- Strangford Lough is one of the UK and Ireland's most important breeding sites for harbour (common) seals.
- Saltmarsh is a rare habitat in Northern Ireland but Strangford Lough and Lecale have some of the best examples of it.
- The Lough's seabed is a tapestry of different habitats and conditions; some, such as the Horse Mussel community, with hundreds of associated species.

The Strangford Lough **Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Area, (SPA)** lie at the heart of the MPA and cover most of its geographic area. These designations afford the highest level of protection to the related species and habitats (the **Conservation Features**) under European Directives and UK Legislation. They place **statutory responsibilities on public bodies**, such as Government Departments and Local Councils, to safeguard the nature conservation interests and ensure that any development or activity should not adversely affect them. It does not mean that activities cannot take place but it does mean that they must be planned and managed carefully.

All authorities must complete a **Habitats Regulations Assessment** before introducing or supporting any new plan or activity with the potential to affect the Conservation Features.

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Authorities should also use the **Precautionary Principle** (see section 2.1) which means that a lack of full scientific evidence must not postpone action to protect the marine environment. The principle anticipates that delaying action would in the longer term prove more costly to society and nature and would compromise the needs of future generations.

The SAC and the SPA are the main (though not the only) focus of this Scheme and their associated Conservation Features and the **Conservation Objectives** to maintain, restore or improve them have been prioritised. These Conservation Objectives have been set by DAERA and the related statutory documents may be downloaded ([link](#)). The Objectives are also described in Section 3.3 of this Scheme.

Further information on the Lough's Designations can be found in Section 2.2 but here is a list of the Features.

Special Area of Conservation

- Large shallow inlet and Bay
- Coastal Lagoons
- Mudflats and sandflats not covered by sea water at low tide
- Reefs
- Annual vegetation of drift lines
- Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-puccinellietalia maritima*)
- Perennial vegetation of stony banks
- Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand
- Common Seal (*Phoca vitulina*).

Special Protection Area

- *Terns that breed here in summer: Sandwich Tern (Sterna sandvicensis); Common Tern (Sterna hirundo); and Arctic Tern (Sterna paradisaea)*
- *The overall assemblage of waterfowl that overwinter here*
- *Light-bellied Brent Goose. (Branta bernicla hrota)*
- *Knot (Calidrus canutus)*
- *Redshank (Tringa totanus)*
- *Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria)*
- *Bar-tailed Godwit (Limosa lapponica)*

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- *Shelduck (Tadorna tadorna)*

The MPA has seven **Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs)**: Strangford Lough Parts 1, 2 and 3, Ballyquintin Point, Killard, part of Outer Ards ASSI and Sheepland Coast.

Strangford Lough is a **Ramsar** site for its waterfowl and wetland interest.

The SAC, SPA, ASSIs and Ramsar site all fall within the geographic area covered by the **Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ)** which, in addition, covers a triangular area at the mouth of the Lough and along part of the Lecale and the Outer Ards Coasts.

The MCZ Designated area requires further study by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to identify all of its conservation features, some of which may be additional to those of the SAC / SPA. At the mouth of the Lough these are likely to include marine gullies.

Unfortunately some of the Lough's key species and habitats are currently damaged or in decline – which is described as being in **Unfavourable Condition** because they have dropped below Favourable Condition, which is the target condition for the interest feature in terms of abundance, distribution and / or quality of that feature within the site (see Section 2.1). A priority within the Scheme is to protect and restore these to Favourable Condition. Some measures have already been taken but further action is needed.

The use of mobile fishing gear, ie commercial trawling and dredging for fish, has been banned in the Lough, under Fisheries Legislation, as it has been associated with serious damage to Horse Mussel communities on the seabed. To allow the Horse Mussel communities to recover a restricted zone has been introduced within which all activities with the potential to affect the seabed, including pot fishing, diving, anchoring and mooring, have been banned.

The invasive species, *Spartina* (cord grass) has taken over stretches of Atlantic Salt Meadow and areas of Mud and Sand Colonised by *Salicornia* and Other Annuals.

The Perennial Vegetation of Stony Banks has also been **damaged or removed through agricultural practices; trampling by livestock and removal of stones and ditches.** (Need confirmation that this is the cause of the feature being in unfavourable condition)

Some bird species are also in serious decline. Data from 2011-2015 shows Knot, Common Tern and Golden Plover to have fallen below the threshold for Favourable Condition. Problems affecting migratory birds may be encountered anywhere along the flyway migratory route and may be outside the scope of the Scheme. However, local measures must be taken where they can be applied. In the case of nesting Common Terns, habitat improvement, reducing disturbance, and protection against predators would help to improve fledgling success, but further study is needed to understand fully the causes and effects.

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While restoration of features is a priority it is also important to ensure that the other features are maintained in favourable condition or are improved. New or expanding socio-economic activity such as outdoor recreation or aquaculture has to be carefully assessed and planned so as to be compatible with the environmental designations. Climate change and associated increased storminess and sea level rise are bringing additional challenges to management.

This Management Scheme helps statutory bodies to meet their obligations and responsibilities with regard to the marine and coastal environment of Strangford Lough. It sets the framework through which activities can be managed, either voluntarily or through regulation, so as to protect the environment while allowing it to be used sustainably. It is not a statutory instrument, but an agreed approach to collaborative management between the statutory agencies and stakeholders.

In summary this Management Scheme:

- Lists the important species and habitats – the Conservation Features
- Details the Conservation Objectives which are the standards to which the features should be maintained
- Describes a programme to monitor the features
- Explains existing regulation and management measures and highlights if there is a need to develop initiatives or regulate activities affecting the conservation features, in consultation with local interests
- Clarifies where statutory responsibilities lie
- Provides a structure for collaborative management and co-ordination between bodies and with stakeholders – the Management Group
- Facilitates better communication on management
- Complements other conservation strategies and plans for the area

Comments and queries on this Management Scheme are welcome. **Please contact:**

*This **draft** Scheme has been prepared by the Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership Office on behalf of the Department of Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), with input from relevant statutory authorities and the SLLP Committee of stakeholders.*

It will be submitted to DAERA in April 2017. Thereafter DAERA will review it and circulate their revised version to relevant authorities and the Council for Conservation, Nature and the Countryside (CNCC), for agreement before it is launched and put out to public consultation later in 2017.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Purpose and scope of the Scheme

2.2 Legislative authority for the Scheme (national and international)

2.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE SCHEME

Strangford Lough is part of a network of ecologically coherent Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), under a number of international Conventions and Directives and UK policy and legislation.

The aims of this Scheme are:

- To secure compliance with the objectives of the **European Habitats and Birds Directives** (Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of wild fauna and flora and Directive 2009/147/EC on the conservation of wild birds) .
- To fulfil obligations under the **Convention on Biological Diversity** and will contribute towards meeting Good Environmental Status under the **Marine Strategy Framework Directive** and Good Ecological Status under the **Water Framework Directive**.
- To **protect and conserve the ecosystems and the biological diversity** of the Strangford Lough MPA which is, and could be, affected as a result of human activities, and to restore to favourable condition, where practicable, areas which have been adversely affected.
- To assist Departments and Agencies (relevant / competent authorities of operations) in fulfilling their **statutory responsibilities** as set out by the Conservation (Natural Habitats etc) Regulations (Northern Ireland 1995) and other relevant documents.

The Management Scheme also includes a mechanism for **monitoring and review** which will enable the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) to follow the condition of the MPA and convene the Management Group of authorities and key stakeholders to agree and implement any required management measures. Under the legislation, **Condition Assessment Reports** are required to be produced every six years, but many of the Features are monitored

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annually and **management action is advisable in advance of a Feature being officially declared to be in unfavourable condition** if it is found to be deteriorating or at high risk of deterioration. Surveys and additional monitoring may be used as required to inform management.

The completed and formally agreed Scheme will not be a statutory instrument but represents an **undertaking between those statutory agencies that will implement the Scheme and the stakeholders and local communities** who use it and have a vested interest in the area.

Favourable Condition is defined as " the target condition for an interest feature in terms of the abundance, distribution and/or quality of that feature within the site". If a Feature is found to be in **Unfavourable Condition**, then action must be taken to restore it. However, it is preferable to take management action before the Feature reaches such a state to provide the best chance of recovery and also to reduce costs in the long term.

Operations that may cause deterioration or disturbance to the **conservation features** may be subject to restrictions under the legislation. However, where possible, management will be achieved through voluntary schemes and good practice. Operations which are not causing significant damage to the marine interest of the site will not be adversely affected by management measures.

The OSPAR network of Marine Protected Areas aims:

- to protect, conserve and restore species, habitats and ecological processes which have been adversely affected by human activities;
- to prevent degradation of, and damage to, species, habitats and ecological processes, following the precautionary principle;
- to protect and conserve areas that best represent the range of species, habitats and ecological processes in the maritime area.

One of the guiding principles of the OSPAR Convention is the **precautionary principle**. Under the ecosystem approach adopted by the OSPAR Commission, the precautionary principle encompasses all human activities. By virtue of the precautionary principle, preventive measures are to be taken when there are reasonable grounds for concern that human activities may bring about hazards to human health, harm living resources and marine ecosystems, damage amenities or interfere with other legitimate uses of the sea, even when there is no conclusive evidence of a causal relationship. A lack of full scientific evidence must not postpone action to protect the marine environment. The principle anticipates that delaying action would in the longer term prove more costly to society and nature and would compromise the needs of future generations.

In developing and implementing this Scheme the aims of the international OSPAR (see Section 2.2) MPA network, guidance for the development of SAC / SPA Management Schemes, and MPA Schemes from other sites have been, and will be, considered, to assist NI wide co-ordination, best practice and sharing of knowledge. It is intended to help reduce conflict between competing interests and, through collaboration, attract funding for joint management initiatives.

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This Scheme is being developed in consultation with, and as far as feasible agreement of, key stakeholders. It will help to ensure that the marine nature conservation interest (which is an intrinsic part of the Lough's heritage) is sustained for future generations and managed as far as possible in harmony with the socio-economic interests of the area.

People have used the Lough's resources for about 9,000 years, but modern technology, new practices and urbanisation have had, and will continue to have, dramatic effects on the Lough's complex system where habitats, species, natural change and human activities all interconnected.

Safeguarding the Lough's environment also brings **tangible benefits to people** who rely on the Lough and the surrounding countryside as a resource

- to experience nature and the great outdoors for mental and physical health and well-being,
- to attract tourism and outdoor recreation related revenue,
- for fishing, aquaculture and agriculture food production
- as an attractive, high quality environment in which to live and work
- as a place for scientific and technological research, experimentation and education

Conserving the Lough as a **sustainable resource** now and for future generations is part of the **Northern Ireland Programme for Government**, which depends on collaborative working for its delivery.

"We live and work sustainably – protecting the environment"

"A place where people want to live and work, visit and invest";

"We enjoy long, healthy, active lives"

Under this Scheme activities will be managed if they are likely to damage the features for which the site was designated. It is preferable if damage can be prevented through voluntary measures such as codes of conduct. By-laws or regulations will only be introduced when voluntary methods will not achieve the desired results.

Many local people and landowners are already managing the area's natural resources to the benefit of the MPA. Many activities are managed through compliance with existing legislation such as, planning, farming, conservation and fisheries legislation. The aim is to work with local people and Lough users to **develop voluntary management where possible rather than relying solely on legislation**.

The Conservation objectives and this Scheme are consistent with the Programme for Government, and will help to inform rural development, tourism and outdoor recreation plans and projects, Village Plans, Local Development Plans, AONB Plans and Community Plans.

2.2 LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY FOR THE SCHEME (NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL)

This Marine Protected Area (MPA) Scheme is underpinned by international Conventions and Directives and UK policy and legislation to protect the marine and coastal environment of Strangford Lough. Within the overarching Marine Protected Area some of the species and habitats may be protected under a number of designations each of which enables different measures to be applied for their conservation. The Marine Protected Area covers the geographic extent of all of the designated areas listed below.

Operations that may cause deterioration or disturbance to the conservation features of the site may be subject to restrictions under the legislation. Activities which are not causing significant damage to the marine interest of the site will not be adversely affected.

The Strangford Lough **Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Area (SPA)**, is protected under the **Habitats and Birds Directives** (Council Directive 92/43/EC on the Conservation of wild fauna and flora and Directive 2009/147/EC on the conservation of wild birds) **and the Habitats Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended)**

Regulation 29 of the *Habitats Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (NI) 1995 (as amended)* states that the Department of Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs and the relevant authorities, or any of them, **may establish for marine SACs and SPAs a management scheme under which their functions (including any power to make byelaws) shall be exercised** so as to secure in relation to that site compliance with the requirements of the Habitats Directive.

It goes on to say that only one management scheme may be made for each site and that the scheme may be amended from time to time.

Under these Regulations, public bodies such as local councils and other '**competent authorities**' have statutory responsibilities to safeguard the nature conservation interests and must ensure that plans and projects likely to have a significant effect on Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection areas and internationally designated Ramsar sites are appropriately assessed to ensure that they will not adversely affect the conservation features.

Ramsar

Strangford Lough also one of a network of Ramsar sites under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance. Such sites may be designated for their waterfowl populations, important plant and animal assemblages, wetland interest or a combination of these. Governments are encouraged to promote the conservation and 'wise use' of wetlands in general. The boundary of the Ramsar site is identical to that of the SPA.

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The MPA includes the intertidal areas of five **Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI)**: Strangford Lough Parts 1, 2 and 3, Ballyquintin Point and Killard.

Strangford Lough became Northern Ireland's first **Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ)** under the Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013: It includes all the waters, seabed and shores up to mean tide high water mark and an area around the mouth of the Lough which extends beyond the SAC towards Sheepland.

Parts of the Lough are **National Nature Reserves (NNRs)** under the management of the Northern Ireland Environment Agency / Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs or the National Trust.

The surrounding area down to low water is part of the **Strangford and Lecale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**.

Strangford Lough became Northern Ireland's first **Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) under the Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013**: It includes all the waters, seabed and shores up to mean tide high water mark and an area around the mouth of the Lough which extends beyond the SAC towards Sheepland.

Parts of the Lough are **National Nature Reserves (NNRs)** under the management of the Northern Ireland Environment Agency / Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs or the National Trust.

OSPAR Convention

The United Kingdom is one of 15 Governments and the EU that are signed up to the 1992 OSPAR Convention and its 1998 annex on biodiversity and ecosystems adopted in 1998. The OSPAR Commission provides a mechanism for co-operation to protect the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic. Its objective is to take the necessary measures to protect and conserve the ecosystems and the biological diversity of the maritime area which are, or could be, affected as a result of human activities, and to restore, where practicable, marine areas which have been adversely affected. Strangford Lough is part of the OSPAR Network of ecologically coherent Marine Protected Areas. The OSPAR Network contributes to, and takes account of, Contracting Parties' obligations under other international Conventions and Directives, including EC Directives.

The OSPAR network of MPAs aims:

- to protect, conserve and restore species, habitats and ecological processes which have been adversely affected by human activities;
- to prevent degradation of, and damage to, species, habitats and ecological processes, following the precautionary principle;
- to protect and conserve areas that best represent the range of species, habitats and ecological processes in the maritime area.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE AND ITS FEATURES

- 3.1 Regional setting, location access
- 3.2 Physical description
- 3.3 Conservation values and features
- 3.4 Existing uses
- 3.5 Existing legal and management framework

3.1 REGIONAL SETTING: LOCATION, ACCESS

Strangford Lough is on the east coast of County Down, Northern Ireland. Its northern end lies some 15 km east of Central Belfast (6 km from the outskirts). Downpatrick lies 5 km west of the southwest corner.

The Marine Protected Area covers the geographic extent of all of the related designated areas. Its boundary is coincident with the Marine Conservation Zone which incorporates the SAC, SPA Ramsar site and ASSIs. It covers approximately 192km²

The SAC and the SPA include all the sub-tidal, marine area of the Lough and its foreshore up to the landward boundary of the Strangford Lough (Parts 1-3), Killard and Ballyquintin Point ASSIs. This includes small areas of terrestrial habitat. The SAC and SPA are bounded across the Narrows by a straight line from Killard Point to Ballyquintin Point. At the estuary of the Comber River the SAC ends at the start of the bend next the A22 road at Irish Grid line 346240East (Longitude 5° 44' 22.86" West).

The SPA also includes the primarily freshwater area of the Quoile Pondage National Nature Reserve.

The MPA also takes in a triangular area of foreshore and open sea around the mouth of the Lough which is part of the MCZ and includes Sheepland ASSI and part of Outer Ards ASSI. This is bounded to the East by a line of longitude 5° 27' 35.27" West which intersects HWMMT at Port Down, Kearney Village at Irish Grid reference 365000 East, 351509 North.

It is bounded to the South by line of Latitude 54° 16' 31.07" North which intersects HWMMT at Sheepland Harbour at Irish Grid reference 357964 East, 339000 North. Outer Ards ASSI is included (the boundary ends at Port Down, south of Kearney) while on the other side it includes Sheeplands Coast ASSI

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The south-east extremity of the MNR is at 365441 East, 339263 North, some 5.545km ESE of the nearest landfall at Craiglewey, Killard Point. This outer triangle adds a further 38km² approximately of sub-tidal and 4km² of intertidal habitat to the MPA . **convert to all lat long or all grid ref – need to reflect this in the Conservation Objectives**

3.2 PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Strangford Lough

Strangford Lough is a large (approximately 150km²) shallow sea lough, of which about 50 km² lies between high and low water mark mean tide. Almost land-locked, Strangford Lough is separated from the Irish Sea by the Ards Peninsula to the east and is bounded to the south by the Lecale coast. The Strangford Narrows, an 8 km long channel with a minimum width of 0.5km, connects it to the open sea. This narrow entrance channel has extremely strong currents of up to 8 knots (4m/s). The Lough is 30km long from head to mouth and up to 8km wide.

The tidal flats of Strangford Lough form extensive areas around the northern and north-eastern shorelines. They are bounded to the north east by sea defences for the town of Newtownards and the A20 coastal road that runs along much of the Lough's eastern shoreline from Newtownards to Portaferry.

The main characteristic of the SAC and SPA is the sea inlet of Strangford Lough itself. This sea inlet emerged from under the melting ice-sheets of the Ice Age and is for the most part less than 10 m in depth. There is a deeper Y-shaped channel (possibly an old river-valley or geological fault-line) up to 66 m deep which extends from the Narrows up the central portion of the Lough. The other arm of the "Y" goes towards Kircubbin.

The underlying rock is largely Silurian. The Lough has an indented shoreline and a great variety of subtidal and intertidal habitats. The west shore has numerous islands typical of flooded drumlin topography. Pladdies, found mainly along the more exposed eastern shore, are eroded drumlins, covered at high tide.

The physical regime of the Lough, with its high water quality, complex current systems and varying topography, substrata and water depths, is hugely important to the overall ecosystem.

The nature of the sediments of the shore and seabed are predominantly determined by a combination of the geological history and the present tides, currents, and exposure to wave action. In general there is a gradation from the Narrows, moving both into the body of the Lough and offshore into the Irish Sea, from bedrock, through cobble, gravel and sand to mud. There are extensive areas of mudflat and also sandflats mainly at the northern end of the Lough. There are also areas of

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saltmarsh, the most extensive being in the Comber river estuary. The gradation of sediments is modified by the effects of shelter and currents around islands and pladdies.

The water in the Lough is virtually fully saline except at the mouths of the two moderate-sized rivers, the Comber and the Quoile, and where several streams drain into it from the catchment of about 900km², where it may be somewhat brackish. The area has a mild climate with relatively low rainfall compared with other areas of Ireland, infrequent frosts and prevailing west to southwest winds.

Strangford Lough supports an impressive range of marine habitats and communities with over 2,000 recorded species. It is important for marine invertebrates, algae and saltmarsh plants, for wintering and breeding wetland birds, and for marine mammals. The invertebrate shore fauna is rich.

A number of notable maritime vegetation communities occur. Seventeen rare plant species have been recorded.

Internationally significant populations of light bellied Brent geese, knot, redshank, bar-tailed godwit, golden plover and shelduck.

Nationally important populations of 11 other species of bird, including turnstone and ringed plover.

The main rivers entering the lough are the Comber River in the northwest and the Quoile River in the southwest. Numerous smaller rivers and streams exist throughout the area, all entering Strangford Lough at various points.

Outer Ards (Ballyquintin Point to Kearney) and Sheepland Coast (Killard Point to Sheepland Harbour) and Associated Seabed

The Sheepland Coast incorporates a rocky coastline, with cliff vegetation and other grassland communities. It includes pockets of saltmarsh and strandline along sheltered inlets. The rock exposures are of exceptional, geological interest.

The Outer Ards has an internationally important rock series and the lower shore is particularly rich in red algae.

Marine gullies are found at the mouth of the Lough.

Land usage in the catchment is approximately 90% agricultural land (pastures, complex cultivation patterns and agriculture/natural vegetation). The main coastal settlements are Newtownards, Downpatrick and Comber. Smaller towns and villages are Greyabbey, Kircubbin, Portaferry, Killyleagh, Strangford, Kilclief and Ballyhornan and there are a number of smaller settlements.

3.3 CONSERVATION VALUES AND FEATURES

Please see Section 7 for a description of the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and the Special Protection Area (SPA) Features. The formal advice from DAERA on the Conservation Objectives for the SAC and the SPA may be downloaded from [\(link\)](#) and has informed this Section of the Management Scheme.

Within the Marine Protected Area, the Special Area of Conservation and Special Protection Area designations afford the highest level of protection to the species and habitats listed within them, the SAC / SPA Conservation Features, and they have been prioritised within this Scheme.

Special Area of Conservation Features:

- Large shallow inlet and Bay
- Coastal Lagoons
- Mudflats and sandflats not covered by sea water at low tide
- Reefs
- Annual vegetation of drift lines
- Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-puccinellietalia maritima*)
- Perennial vegetation of stony banks
- Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand
- Common Seal (*Phoca vitulina*).

Special Protection Area Features

- Terns that breed here in summer: Sandwich Tern (*Sterna sandvicensis*); Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*); and Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*)
- The overall assemblage of waterfowl that overwinter here
- Light-bellied Brent Goose. (*Branta bernicla hrota*)
- Knot (*Calidrus canutus*)
- Redshank (*Tringa totanus*)
- Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*)
- Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*)
- Shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*)

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The MPA has 7 Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs), the main form of domestic statutory protection for sites of high nature conservation value. Strangford Lough Parts 1, 2 and 3, Ballyquintin Point and Killard ASSIs fall within the boundary of the SAC / SPA and some of their features are covered under the SAC and SPA designation. Outer Ards and Sheepland Coast are outside of the SAC / SPA .

Strangford Lough is a Ramsar site for its waterfowl and wetland interest.

The SAC, SPA, ASSIs and Ramsar site all fall within the geographic area covered by the Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) . Conservation Features for the Marine Conservation Zone are largely coincident with those of the SAC / SPA / ASSI but include some which are not covered by these designations and also includes those in the extended triangle at the mouth of the Lough that falls outside the SAC / SPA boundary.

The MCZ features are currently under review by DAERA and related conservation objectives will be developed. Just beyond the mouth of the Lough marine gullies are of particular interest.

Conservation features have been identified for the SAC , SPA and ASSI and they are listed in the tables below. Each of these Features contributes to the overall integrity of the Lough and are described in more detail in Section 7. The physical system of water movement, water quality, salinity, depth, light, and substrate are intrinsic to the Lough's ecology which is .

The Habitats Directive requires these Features to be maintained at, or restored to, Favourable Condition status. Favourable Condition status requires that the range and areas of the listed habitats, and the range and population of the listed species, should be at least maintained at their status when the Directive came into force in 1994 or, where the 1994 status was not viable in the long term, to be restored to a position where it would be viable.

When assessing the conservation status of habitats, four parameters are considered. These are: range, area, structure and function (referred to as habitat condition) and future prospects. For species, the parameters are: range, population, habitat (extent and condition) and future prospects. Each of these parameters is assessed as being in one of the following conditions: Favourable, Unfavourable - Inadequate, Unfavourable - Bad, or Unknown.

The Conservation Objectives have been set by DAERA and they aim to maintain, restore, or enhance the Features.

The following SAC and SPA Features are currently in Unfavourable Condition:

Reefs *M modiolus* communities
Perennial vegetation of stony banks

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Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-puccinellietalia maritima*)
Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand
Golden Plover,
Common Tern
Knot

The most recent **SPA Condition Assessment Report (2014)** was based on data from 2004-2010 when all of the SPA features were in favourable condition. However the **five year mean population data from 2011-2015** show knot, common tern and golden plover to have fallen below the threshold and these are now in Unfavourable Condition

The **Threat and Conflict analysis** in Section 3.6 identifies potential and actual causes for a decline in any Feature and the management measures required to maintain , restore or enhance them.

Special Area of Conservation Features

In the table below , the global status A, B, C is an expert judgement of the overall value of the site for the conservation of the relevant Feature at the time of designation.

The principal features for which sites have been selected are those graded A or B

The secondary features are graded C. All three grades are qualifying SAC interest features.

A - Sites holding outstanding examples of the habitat in a European context.

B - Sites holding excellent stands of the habitat, significantly above the threshold for ASSI notification but of somewhat lower value than grade A sites.

C - Examples of Features which are of at least national interest (i.e. usually above the threshold or ASSI notification on terrestrial sites) but not significantly above this. These habitats are not the primary reason for SACs being selected.

The Special Area of Conservation Objective is to maintain the Conservation Features in Favourable Condition.

For each SAC feature, there are a number of component objectives which are outlined in the table below. These measures and targets form the basis of Condition Assessment. The results of this will determine whether the feature is in favourable condition or not.

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This table reflect the measures identified in the Conservation Objectives set by DAERA and cannot be changed without a change in the statutory advice provided in those Conservation Objectives. DAERA have not yet provided all of the baseline information which will strengthen these measures.

Feature	Global Status	Extent	Conservation Objective
<p>Large shallow inlet and Bay</p> <p>Sub-features: Subtidal sand and gravel communities Eutidal fine sand and mud communities</p>	A	15090.6 ha	<p>Maintain the extent of the large shallow inlet and bay</p> <p>Allow the natural processes which determine the development, structure, function and extent of the large shallow inlet and bay, to operate appropriately</p> <p>Maintain and enhance as appropriate, the species diversity within this habitat.</p> <p>Note 1. The extent and diversity of plant and algal communities is affected by water clarity. Light attenuation should not deviate from the baseline subject to natural change. (Light attenuation measured monthly March to September)</p> <p>Note 2. Temperature and salinity are characteristics of the overall hydrography . Temperature & salinity should not deviate significantly from the long-term trends, subject to natural change.</p> <p>Note 3 Nutrient enrichment stimulating excessive growth of phytoplankton is a common factor contributing to a reduction in water clarity. Single species-dominated phytoplankton blooms can also be harmful. There should be no significant increase in phytoplankton concentration from the established baseline, subject to natural change. (Phyto- plankton concentration in summer is measured annually)</p> <p>Characteristic biotopes at sites chosen so as to provide some indication of the distribution and extent of the Sub-Feature should not deviate significantly from the established baseline, subject to natural change</p> <p>Composite species of selected biotopes should not deviate significantly from the established baseline, subject to natural</p>

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			change.
Coastal Lagoons	B	45.0ha	<p>Maintain the extent of the coastal lagoons</p> <p>Allow the natural processes which determine the development, structure, function, and extent of the coastal lagoons to operate appropriately</p> <p>Maintain and enhance as appropriate, the species diversity within this habitat</p> <p>Sub-feature: Tide-swept communities (The Dorn sill)</p> <p>Attribute and target: Characteristic biotopes at sites chosen so as to provide some indication of the distribution and extent of the Sub-Feature. should not deviate significantly from the established baseline, subject to natural change.</p> <p>Attribute and target: Presence and abundance of composite species of selected biotopes should not deviate significantly from an established baseline, subject to natural change.</p> <p>Attribute and target: No decrease in extent from an established baseline, subject to natural change.</p>
Mudflats and sandflats not covered by sea water at low tide	B	2000.0 ha	<p>Maintain the extent of the mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide</p> <p>Allow the natural processes which determine the development, structure and extent of the mudflats and sandflats not covered by sea water at low tide to operate appropriately</p> <p>Maintain and enhance, as appropriate, the species diversity within the habitat</p> <p>Sub Features:</p> <p>Attributes and targets:</p> <p>Ensure that any loss in extent and change in system dynamics is only due to natural processes and that no human induced developments impact on the natural system</p> <p>Characteristic biotopes at sites chosen so as to provide some indication of the distribution and extent of the Sub-Feature should not deviate significantly from the established baseline, subject to natural change.</p> <p>Intertidal Sand and Gravel Communities</p>

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<p>Intertidal Fine Sand and Mud Communities</p>	<p>Species composition of selected biotopes at monitoring sites should not deviate significantly from the established baseline, subject to natural change</p>
<p><i>Zostera Spp</i> Beds: <i>Z. noltii</i>, <i>Z. angustifolia</i> <i>Z. marina</i></p>	<p>Distribution of <i>Zostera</i> beds should not deviate significantly from the established baseline, subject to natural change.</p> <p>Extent should not deviate significantly from the established baseline, subject to natural change.</p> <p>Average 'biomass' should not deviate significantly from the long term average</p> <p>Average shoot density should not deviate significantly from the long term average</p>
<p>B 1600.0 ha</p>	<p>Reefs</p> <p>Restore the reefs and their characteristic species to favourable condition, allowing for natural change</p> <p>Allow the natural processes which determine the development, structure, function and extent of the reefs to operate appropriately</p> <p>Sub-features:</p> <p>Maintain and enhance, as appropriate, the species diversity within the habitat.</p> <p>Attributes and targets:</p> <p>Presence of the selected biotopes at selected sites should not deviate significantly from the established baseline, subject to natural change</p>
<p>Subtidal Rock and Boulder Communities</p>	<p>Composite species of selected biotopes should not deviate significantly from the established baseline, subject to natural change</p>
<p>Subtidal Rocky Reef Communities</p>	
<p>Intertidal Rock and Boulder Communities</p>	

<p><i>Modiolus modiolus</i> Beds</p>	<p>Modiolus beds (SCR.ModCVar) and other biotopes should be present in those areas of the Lough where they historically occurred.</p> <p>Restore the extent and percentage cover of Modiolus beds over areas of the Lough where they historically occurred</p> <p>Species index of the Modiolus modiolus beds should not deviate from the established baseline, subject to natural change.</p>
<p>Annual vegetation of drift lines</p>	<p>C 250 km</p> <p>Maintain and enhance the extent of the annual vegetation of drift lines subject to natural processes</p> <p>Allow the natural processes which determine the development and extent of annual vegetation of drift lines to operate appropriately</p> <p>Maintain and enhance, as appropriate, the species diversity within this community including the presence of notable species</p> <p>Attributes and targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No human induced developments should impact on the natural system. • Maintain the presence and broad distribution of stands of Honckenya peploides – Cakile maritima SD2 community and the SD3 Matricaria maritima - Galium aparine community together with other local variants across the feature measured during late summer(July/August) • No increase in area where vegetation colonisation/recolonisation is prevented by human activity • To maintain the presence of notable species at localities with historical records

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Atlantic salt meadows <i>(Glaucopuccinellietalia maritima)</i>	C	75.0 ha	<p>To restore the Atlantic salt meadows and their characteristic species to favourable condition, allowing for natural change.</p> <p>Maintain or enhance as appropriate, the composition of salt marsh communities</p> <p>Maintain transitions between saltmarsh communities and to other adjoining habitats</p> <p>Attributes and targets:</p> <p>Permit the continued operation of formative and controlling natural processes acting on the saltmarsh communities</p> <p>Subject to natural processes, restore the overall extent of saltmarsh vegetation.</p> <p>No increase in either the linear extent or the area constrained by introduced structures or landforms</p> <p>No further anthropogenic alteration of creek patterns or loss of pans compared to an established baseline.</p> <p><i>(Creeks and pans vary in size and density. Creeks absorb tidal energy and assist with the delivery of sediment into saltmarshes. Major erosion of saltmarsh is indicated by internal dissection and enlargement of the drainage network).</i></p> <p>Maintain presence of saltmarsh communities SM10, SM13, SM16, SM18, SM19, SM20 and SM28 as established at baseline survey.</p> <p>Restore / Maintain presence of associated semi-natural habitats</p> <p>Restore / maintain at least 5 of the positive indicator species indicators for low-level marsh (SM10) listed below at least occasional, of which 3 are at least frequent throughout the sward: <i>Suaeda maritima</i>, <i>Salicornia</i> agg., <i>Puccinellia maritima</i>, <i>Aster tripolium</i>, <i>Limonium humile</i>, <i>Glaux maritima</i>, <i>Cochlearia officinalis</i>, <i>Plantago maritima</i>, <i>Triglochin maritima</i> <i>Armeria maritima</i>.</p> <p>Maintain short sward in areas of species-rich vegetation.</p> <p>Maintain mean sward height at less than 12 cm.</p>
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* Maintain frequency of positive indicators for low-level marsh

(SM13a, b, c and d) (*Suaeda maritima*, *Salicornia* spp., *Puccinellia maritima*, *Aster tripolium*, *Limonium humile*, *Glaux maritima*, *Cochlearia officinalis*, *Plantago maritima*, *Triglochin maritima*, *Armeria maritima*.)

Ensure species-poor/rank communities/sub-communities do not increase at the expense of other sub-communities.

Note: *Zostera* and *Ruppia* beds (SM1 and SM2) and stands of *Salicornia* and *Suaeda* (SM8 and SM9) are included within other Annex 1 habitat types/ ASSI selection features.

Maintain sward Height (SM13a, b, c and d)

Maintain frequency of positive indicators for middle marsh communities (SM16b, c, d and e) (*Puccinellia maritima*, *Aster tripolium*, *Limonium humile*, *Glaux maritima*, *Cochlearia officinalis*, *Plantago maritima*, *Triglochin maritima*, *Armeria maritima*, *Festuca rubra*, *Juncus gerardii*, *Agrostis stolonifera*, *Trifolium repens*, *Leontodon autumnalis*, *Carex flacca*)

Sward Height (SM16b, c, d and e)

Maintain frequency of positive indicators for upper marsh communities (e.g. SM18a, SM19 and SM20 and SM28) *Juncus maritimus*, *Agrostis stolonifera*, *Festuca rubra*, *Glaux maritima*, *Juncus gerardii*, *Triglochin maritima*, *Plantago maritima*, *Armeria maritima*, *Aster tripolium*, *Elymus repens*, *Atriplex prostrata*, *Potentilla anserina*, *Phragmites australis*, *Blysmus rufus*, *Eleocharis uniglumis*

Maintain Sward Height Upper marsh communities less than 1m

Spartina be should be recorded as absent or rare across the saltmarsh communities.

Scrub encroachment no more than occasional in transitional communities

Cover of litter/thatch accumulation less than 25% mean cover

Bare areas resulting from trampling by stock or human activity (vehicle use, etc.) should account for less than 10 % of the extent of all communities with the exception of SM 10.

There should be no management activities leading to erosion.

No evidence of oil or other forms of pollution

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Artificial drainage channels adversely affecting hydrology are absent or rare.

Maintain distinctive elements at current extent/levels and/or in current locations (e.g. maintain existing populations of notable species, important structural attributes or notable transitions between habitats)

**Perennial
vegetation of
stony banks**

C

30.0 ha

To restore the perennial vegetation of stony banks and their characteristic species to favourable condition, allowing for natural change.

Allow the natural processes which determine the development and extent of perennial vegetation of stony banks to operate appropriately

Maintain and enhance as appropriate, the species diversity within the community including the presence of notable spp.

Attributes and targets:

Subject to natural processes maintain the overall extent of the vegetation

Attribute and target: No increase in the linear extent or area constrained by introduced structures or landforms

Maintain Sward height

Keep Litter cover to less than 10%

Keep Bare ground to less than 10%

Retain zonation, Maintain range and distribution of shingle banks (SD2, SD3), saltmarsh (SM9, SM10, SM13, SM14, SM16 and SM28), grasslands (SD8, MC8, MC9, MG1, MG11 and MG12) and scrub (W23, W24).

Presence of positive indicator species in the dry grassland plots eg *Agrostis spp.*, *Aira spp.*, *Armeria maritima*, *Carex panicea*, *Centaurea nigra*, *Cladonia spp.*, *Danthonia decumbens*, *Festuca rubra*, *Galium saxatile*, *Galium verum*, *Hypochaeris radicata*, *Jasione montana*, *Koeleria macrantha*, *Lotus corniculatus*, *Molinia caerulea*, *Plantago lanceolata*, *Polypodium agg.*, *Potentilla erecta*, *Rumex acetosella*, *Scilla verna*, *Sedum spp.*, *Succisa pratensis*, *Thymus praecox*

Keep agricultural weed species, eutrophic broad-leaved grasses, tree and shrub cover, and bracken to a set minimum

Only occasional tracks and dung

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			Noe evidence of stock feeding or stone removal
Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand	C		<p>To restore the Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand and their characteristic species to favourable condition, allowing for natural change.</p> <p>Allow the natural processes which determine the development and extent of <i>Salicornia</i> and other annuals colonising mud and sand, to operate appropriately</p> <p>Maintain and enhance as appropriate, the species diversity within this habitat.</p> <p>Attributes and targets</p> <p>Subject to natural processes, maintain the overall extent of the vegetation.</p> <p>No increase in either the linear extent or the area constrained by introduced structures or landforms</p> <p>Maintain extent and species composition of low-level marsh communities Salicornia and Suaeda (SM8 and SM9) – At least 1 of the species below recorded as frequent and at least a further 2 as occasional or rare: Salicornia agg., Suaeda maritima, Zostera spp., Ruppia spp., Puccinellia maritima, Aster tripolium, Spargularia media, Limonium humile, Cochlearia officinalis</p> <p>Spartina be should be recorded as absent or rare in Salicornia communities.</p> <p>Area and thickness of algal mats should not deviate significantly from an established baseline, subject to natural change</p> <p>Bare areas resulting from trampling by stock or human activity (vehicle use, etc.) should account for less than 10 % of the extent of the habitat</p> <p>There should be no management activities leading to erosion</p> <p>No evidence of oil or other forms of pollution</p>
Common Seal <i>Phoca vitulina</i>	C	210	<p>Maintain and enhance as appropriate, the common seal population</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The number of adults to be at least 200 individuals. - Number of pups to be at least 25% of the population Resident time to be at least 3 weeks

Maintain and enhance as appropriate, physical features used by Common Seals within the site

- Maintain the number of suitable sites for moulting, haul-out and breeding.

Perennial vegetation of stony banks

Gransha Point

- is still an active shingle bank, and the importance of ensuring that active processes are maintained is one of the fundamental aims here.

In contrast, Ballyquintin Point is no longer an active system, so coastal processes are not particularly relevant, except for occasional storm events which may cause some erosion.

The "habitat" at both sites is a complex of many different habitats. Main aim is to maintain the full range of communities.

To restore the perennial vegetation of stony banks and their characteristic species to favourable condition, allowing for natural change

Allow the natural processes which determine the development and extent of perennial vegetation of stony banks to operate appropriately

Maintain and enhance, as appropriate, the species diversity within this community, including the presence of notable species

Attributes and targets:

Subject to natural processes, maintain the overall extent of the vegetation at 1.92 ha.

Gransha Point - 1.02 ha

Mid Island (at least partially on shingle) – 0.9 ha

No increase in either the linear extent or the area constrained by introduced structures or landforms.

Sward height should be between 5-15 cm over at least 75% of the sample plots within grassland habitats

Average litter cover (i.e. dense thatch-like material in a more or less continuous layer) should be less than 10 %.

Bare areas resulting from disturbance should account for less than 10 % of the extent of any of the habitat

No management activities leading to erosion.

The current range of NVC communities and their approximate distribution should be maintained

Frequency of community character species. At least four of the following at least frequent and four at least occasional throughout the sward:

Agrostis spp., *Aira* spp., *Armeria maritima*, *Carex panicea*, *Centaurea nigra*, *Cladonia* spp., *Danthonia decumbens*, *Festuca rubra*, *Galium saxatile*, *Galium verum*, *Hypochaeris radicata*, *Jasione montana*, *Koeleria macrantha*, *Lotus corniculatus*, *Molinia caerulea*, *Plantago lanceolata*, *Polypodium* agg., *Potentilla*

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Particular issues of note are grazing levels (leading to scrub encroachment over more valuable grassland communities) and enrichment.

erecta, Rumex acetosella, Scilla verna, Sedum spp., Succisa pratensis, Thymus praecox

Agricultural weed species at less than 5% cover

Less than 5% *Pteridium aquilinum* over the area as whole

Trees and/or shrubs no more than occasional on W-Walk, with seedlings rare or absent

Dung no more than occasional (as recorded in monitoring plots)

Tracks no more than occasional (over the total area)

No evidence of stock feeding (over the total area)

No evidence of stone removal (over the total area)

SPECIAL PROTECTION AREA FEATURES

Strangford Lough is Northern Ireland's most important coastal site for wintering waterfowl. This interest is dependent upon the Lough continuing to have extensive areas of mud and sandflats which remain largely free from disturbance and have adequate supplies of food, notably eelgrass and shellfish and other invertebrates, to support the very large numbers of visiting birds. Thus water quality and sediment characteristics can influence the Lough's status as an SPA.

Breeding terns that arrive in summer require island habitat suitable as nest sites, freedom from disturbance and a good food supply (mainly sand eels).

Strangford Lough has been classified as an SPA for the following Features:

Nationally and internationally important populations of regularly occurring species listed on Annex 1 of the Directive (Article 4.1)

SPA feature 1: *Internationally important populations of breeding Sandwich Tern (Sterna sandvicensis)*

SPA feature 2: *Internationally important populations of breeding Common Tern (Sterna hirundo)*

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SPA feature 3: *Nationally important populations of breeding Arctic Tern (Sterna paradisaea)*

Nationally and internationally important populations of regularly occurring wintering and migratory species. (Article 4.2)

SPA feature 4: *Internationally important populations of wintering Light-bellied Brent Goose. (Branta bernicla hrota)*

SPA feature 5: *Internationally important populations of wintering Knot (Calidrus canutus)*

SPA feature 6: *Internationally important populations of wintering Redshank (Tringa totanus)*

SPA feature 7: *Internationally important populations of wintering Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria)*

SPA feature 8: *Internationally important populations of wintering Bar-tailed Godwit (Limosa lapponica)*

SPA feature 9: *Internationally important populations of wintering Shelduck (Tadorna tadorna)*

SPA feature 7: *The wintering waterfowl population*

The landward boundary of the SPA is entirely coincident with the landward boundary of the following five Areas of Special Scientific Interest: Strangford Lough Part 1, Strangford Lough Part 2, Strangford Lough Part 3, Killard and Ballyquintin Point.

Roost sites occurring outside the extent of natural or semi-natural habitat, together with those agriculturally improved areas utilised by swans and geese, are not listed as a feature but their extent and location is important to the well-being of the features. They have therefore been included in the SPA Objectives tables.

The condition of bird populations also directly relates to some of the SAC features such as the Mudflat and Sandflat eelgrass (Zostera spp.) beds.

Notes on SPA features

The table that follows lists all relevant qualifying species for this site. As the identification of SPA features has and continues to evolve, species may have different status but all should be considered in the context of any HRA process. Ultimately all SPAs will be re-notified to formalise species features.

a – species cited in current SPA citation and listed on current N2K dataform

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- b – species selected post SPA designation through UK SPA Review 2001
- c – species highlighted as additional qualifying features through the UK SPA Review 2015 or the UK marine SPA programmes.

The Habitat used by these birds is not a selection feature of the SPA but it is an important factor affecting them. So DAERA will monitor and assess “Habitat” as though it were a feature.

Table 1. List of SPA selection features.

The 2014 Condition Assessment is the last formal Report that has been produced for the SPA and is based on data from 2005-2010. In the interim, monitoring is on-going and the Scheme includes data from the five year mean 2011-2015.

Currently Golden Plover, Common Tern and Knot are in unfavourable condition.

Annual monitoring reports will be provided to the Management Group so that trends may be identified at an early stage and management adapted accordingly. This will of course allow for the fact that annual fluctuations or anomalies may occur.

The Conservation Objective for the SPA is:

To maintain, restore or enhance the population of the qualifying species

To maintain, restore or enhance the range of habitats utilised by the qualifying species

To ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained:

To ensure there is no significant disturbance of species and

To ensure that the following are maintained in the long term:

- Population of the species as a viable component of the site
- Distribution of the species within the site
- Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species
- Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species

In addition, for tern species

To ensure fledging success is sufficient to maintain or enhance population

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SPA Selection features table

Feature Type	Feature	5 year mean 2011-2015	2014 Condition Assessment 5 yr mean 2005-2010	Population at time of designation (SPA)	Common Standards Monitoring Baseline(min. peak 1991/92 – 1997/98)	Conservation Objective
Species	Sandwich Tern ^a	715	1,430	593	346	As above
Species	Common Tern ^a	235	944	603	560	As above
Species	Arctic Tern ^a	318	567	210	47	As above
Species	Golden Plover ^b	2,298		8,277	3,123	As above
Species	Bar - Tailed Godwit ^b	842	1,068	1058	291	As above
Species	Light-Bellied Brent Goose ^f	26,120	25,735	10,527	8,367	As above
Species	Shelduck ^b	2,692	4,408	2358	1,755	As above
Species	Knot ^a	1,763	6,520	8,723	4,200	As above
Species	Redshank ^l	2,428	4,243	3,176	2,336	As above
Waterbird Assemblage		41,407	79,679	70,200	35,667	As above
Assemblage sp	Great Crested Grebe	41	Data not provided	94	40	As above
Assemblage sp	Cormorant	158	Data not provided	Not listed	123	As above
Assemblage sp	Greylag Goose	448	Data not provided	420	173	As above
Assemblage sp	Wigeon	751	Data not provided	1975	1,630	As above

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Assemblage sp	Gadwall	110	Data not provided	110	63	As above
Assemblage sp	Teal	2,152	Data not provided	1662	1,133	As above
Assemblage sp	Mallard	1371	Data not provided	1,562	1,238	As above
Assemblage sp	Pintail	415	- Data not provided	214	159	As above
Assemblage sp	Shoveler	88	Data not provided	140	101	As above
Assemblage sp	Goldeneye	113	Data not provided	298	157	As above
Assemblage sp	Red-Breasted Merganser	Data not provided -	Data not provided -	338	191	As above
Assemblage sp	Coot	63	Data not provided	510	222	As above
Assemblage sp	Oystercatcher	5,503	Data not provided	8,248	4125	As above
Assemblage sp	Ringed Plover	191	Data not provided -	305	134	As above
Assemblage sp	Grey Plover	47	Data not provided	284	48	As above
Assemblage sp	Lapwing	3,309	Data not provided	9,108	3,779	As above
Assemblage sp	Dunlin	1,903	Data not provided	6,900	2,403	As above
Assemblage sp	Curlew	1315	Data not provided	1980	1,344	As above
Assemblage sp	Turnstone	378	Data not provided	350	207	As above

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ASSI Feature Objective Requirements Further information is required from DAERA to identify objectives for the ASSI features that are not also SAC features.

Feature	Size, extent, popln	Component Objective
Intertidal Rock	1645ha	See SAC Selection feature Objective Requirements table.
Mudflats	2000ha	See SAC Selection feature Objective Requirements table.
Coastal Vegetated Shingle	250km	See SAC Selection feature Objective Requirements table.
Coastal Saltmarsh	75ha	See SAC Selection feature Objective Requirements table.
Maritime Cliff & Slope	Info not provided	To be finalised
Higher Plant Assemblage	Info not provided	To be finalised
Invertebrate Assemblage	Info not provided	To be finalised
Waterbird Assemblage	See SPA	See SPA Conservation Objectives
Common Seal <i>Phoca vitulina</i>	See SAC	See SAC Selection feature Objective Requirements table.
Earth Science - Contemporary coastal processes – the intertidal zone between Greyabbey and Ardmillan Bay	Info not provided	Permit the continued operation of formative and controlling natural processes acting on the inter-tidal system. Maintain natural site morphology subject to natural processes
Earth science - Holocene sea-level history – buried and semi buried components within the intertidal and adjoining areas	Info not provided	Maintain the potential for access to buried and semi-buried components necessary for the demonstration of sea-level history as related to this site. Key localities are at Rough Island , Greyabbey, Ringneill Quay
Earth science Pleistocene Late Glacial Sediments	Info not provided	Maintain extent and quality of exposure, together with access to the features subject to natural processes.

3.4 EXISTING USES

TOURISM AND OUTDOOR RECREATION (OR)

Areas of high scenic and amenity value such as Strangford Lough are an important part of Northern Ireland's tourism product. Investment in tourism has brought employment, new prosperity and diverse business opportunities to rural areas. The Lough's designations reinforce that value and can complement the promotion of the marine life and coast as an attraction. Local communities and businesses often engage in conservation and landscape initiatives to attract and retain visitors.

The **Newry, Mourne and Down Tourism Strategy 2017-2021** proposes to develop the Mourne Coastal Route and Walking Trail, promote walking and rowing and develop access to the water in Strangford Lough. The development of the St Patrick Theme may also have implications for the Lough as more people explore its shores and waters. The **Ards and North Down Borough Council) AANDBC Integrated Strategy**, which will include tourism and outdoor recreation is being developed in 2017. "The Big Plan" for Ards and North Down includes the development of walking, cycling and canoeing in the area. The **Local Outdoor Recreation Forum** has called for better access to the water for a number of activities. Walking trails feature in many coastal **Village Plans**. The **Strangford Lough Destination Plan** is currently delivering OR promotion.

About 2000 **yachts** are located around the Lough and there are approximately 5000 active boaters and eleven clubs. Club races and regattas take place throughout the summer with frequent all-Ireland and international events for particular classes. Yachting instruction takes place at several centres.

Most yachts and power boats are moored on permanent swing moorings close to club premises. There are also a few public moorings and scattered private moorings elsewhere. Some craft are mud-berthed and a few are berthed at marina type jetties. Visitor berthing is needed and clubs make some provision.

There is a Canoe trail in the Lough and there has been a recent rise in coastal rowing activity with four clubs based around the Lough and international events.

There are public access slipways and harbours but public access is considered to be very limited by users. There are private access areas which are controlled by sailing clubs and landowners.

Dive RIBs and **public tour boats** launch from both Portaferry and Strangford.

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Kite surfing (windsurfing, sailboarding) has become increasingly popular over recent years, particularly at Cunningburn, Greyabbey, Kircubbin and Whiterock. Little depth of water is required and insulating suits enable enthusiasts to sail throughout the year when weather permits.

Water skiing and jet skiing have developed on a small scale, notably at Whiterock and occasionally in the Narrows area, usually in the summer.

Strangford Lough is one of the principal areas in Northern Ireland used by **recreational divers** for training, exploring wrecks and observing marine life. The Lough's sheltered waters are ideal as training areas for novice divers, while also affording some of the most challenging dives to be found in Northern Ireland for the more experienced.

Island Hill, Kilclief and Ballyhornan are popular **bathing** spots. Kilclief and Ballyhornan are candidate EU Bathing Waters.

There are **few public paths** along the shores of the Lough but there are a number of access points and walkable stretches of shore. A stretch of the Lecale Way runs along the Sheepland coast. Killard Point and Ballyquintin Point are publicly accessible. Delamont Country Park and the Castle Ward Estate also provide shore-side walks (fees apply).

Winter **bird-watching** is popular mainly from car parks and the National Trust and the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust bird hides. Seal watching from the car park at Cloghy Rocks is also popular.

The National Trust liaise with local horse owners who have a tradition of exercising horses on the foreshore.

There is a very long tradition of **wildfowling** on Strangford Lough with five wildfowling clubs. Wildfowling on the foreshore and on adjacent lands owned or controlled by the National Trust is subject to controls under the Wildlife Scheme. Mallard is the main quarry species, followed by teal

Newtownards Airfield lies adjacent to the designated area. **Light aircraft, gliders and small helicopters** use the airfield, mostly for recreation.

Microlites are not necessarily associated with a club and may or may not use airfields.

Bait Digging

Bait digging for Lugworm and Ragworm by anglers for individual use has traditionally taken place on a small scale in many places around the Lough. The preferred site in the Lough is at Island Hill.

Outdoor Recreation Issues Relevant to the Conservation Features

A strategic approach to sustainable Outdoor Recreation has already been developed through lengthy public consultation leading to the SLLP Heritage Management Strategy and Action Plan 2013-18 and current plans and proposals are being reviewed under the AONB Action Plan which will be subject to HRA. Some of the relevant proposals include

- Improving boat and equipment wash down facilities for biosecurity.
- Reviving codes of practice to reduce noise and general disturbance to wildlife, particularly to breeding or over-wintering birds and seals from water craft and also from aircraft (mainly helicopter and microlights)
- Developing specific guidelines to paddlers and rowers in view of their ability to access shallow waters and areas near the shore and around islands that are inaccessible to larger craft.
- Reducing coastal bird disturbance through dog walking.
- Raising awareness of relevant fisheries legislation amongst divers and avoid over collection of or damage to marine life for research, recreation or commercial purposes.
- Monitor / assess the impacts of bait digging which may damage eelgrass beds, disturb waterfowl, bury oxygen-rich surface sediments
- Maintaining awareness and promoting good practice amongst horse riders to reduce damage to eel grass beds or disturbance to overwintering birds.
- Engaging the public in related initiatives
- Ensuring access to the water is sustainable

HOUSING AND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

Towns and villages have shorefronts onto the MPA and effluent is pumped into the Lough .

Housing and Development Issues Relevant to the Conservation Features

Local councils are in the process of drawing up Local Development Plans and also consider planning applications which all undergo assessment through Shared Environmental Services. This assessment will consider direct and indirect impacts such as

- The effect of even small developments in isolated areas
- Potential loss or deterioration of saltmarsh and other habitats

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- Disturbance to feeding and nesting birds.
- Increased load on sewage treatment plants or additional septic tanks
- Effects of storm water drainage.
- Damage through tipping and introduction of pollutants
- Climate change and long term demand for further sea defences, causeways and boat slips around developments.
- Development and flooding – need for Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS).

COASTAL ENGINEERING

Much of the larger scale sea defences are located in the northern end of the Lough, protecting the town of Newtownards.

There are now extensive areas of sea wall and rock armouring along the coast .

Coastal Engineering Issues relevant to the Conservation Features

With increased storm activity and predicted sea level rises coastal squeeze is a major issue in terms of wildlife. Loss of coastal farmland and road damage are also of local and national concern. There have been calls for an NI Shoreline Management Plan and some proposals for areas of managed retreat to help dissipate energy.

Coastal engineering works have affected a number of shallow bays, saltmarshes and areas of tidal flat around the Lough.

Causeways, boat slips and other restrictions have modified current and tidal flow patterns and, in turn, affected sediment transport patterns. In some cases this has resulted in the incidental creation of new habitat including saltmarsh, brackish ponds and wetlands.

The effect of rising sea levels and changing weather patterns in the long-term may create a desire for new or additional flood defences at existing settlements.

SAND AND GRAVEL EXTRACTION

Traditional rights to remove sand, gravel and shingle from the shores are attached to the folios of some land-holdings in the area. The removal of intertidal sediments increases the risk of erosion by removing some of the wave-absorbing materials and altering the beach profile. The exercise of extraction rights is not, however, currently a major issue within the MPA.

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OPERATIONS AFFECTING WATER QUALITY

Anthropogenic inputs entering Strangford Lough include those from sewage out-falls, rivers, streams, recreational and commercial craft and associated facilities, and the open sea.

They include nutrients from effluent discharges, organic wastes and fertiliser run-off; some particulate material including bacteria; small amounts of petroleum and oils; some metal ions and other more complex chemicals derived from industrial processes; fuel additives, pesticides, anti-fouling paints, slip-way treatments etc.; and plastic and other floating waste. Fly-tipping of refuse onto the shore could also result in chemicals leaching into the Lough.

There are point sources entering the Lough from urban wastewater and development via wastewater treatment works and septic tanks. The largest discharge is from Ballyrickard Wastewater Treatment Works which serves a population equivalent of approximately 40,000. All Northern Ireland Water discharges are regulated by NIEA and must comply with the conditions set out in the Water (Northern Ireland) Order 1999.

There are also diffuse pressures from agricultural sources (eg slurry and silage effluent) -

Water Quality Issues Relevant to Conservation Features

The water quality in Strangford Lough is currently at Moderate Ecological Status. The North Eastern River Basin Management Plan 2015 status of surface water categorises the Blackstaff (Ards) River on the Ards Peninsula near Kircubbin and adjacent to the Lough as "Bad Ecological Status". Superficial groundwater at Comber area is poor and bedrock ground water is also poor across the whole Strangford Lough area.

High nutrient levels can adversely modify the local biota though such inputs may increase productivity and carrying capacity. Some forms of wildlife, such as ragworms and green algae, thrive in nutrient enriched areas and some of these can have a blanketing effect on the habitat, reducing biodiversity.

Increases in the suspension of organic or inorganic material in the water column increases turbidity and reduces light levels, which along with changes in sedimentation may be affecting the growth of eelgrass.

The North East River Basin Catchment Plan (under the Water Framework Directive) will address these issues.

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FARMING

Farmers and landowners have helped to shape the Strangford Lough landscape and its habitats and contributed to the conservation interests around the Lough. For example, many of the islands which are important for wildfowl or nesting terns are grazed by sheep or cattle. By and large farmers have tolerated the habit of Brent Geese to graze agricultural land when eelgrass is in short supply.

Farming Issues Relevant to the Conservation Features

Some farming practices, can cause localised damage.

Livestock which are free to wander onto the shore may result in damage to strandline vegetation and saltmarsh. Their trampling can seriously poach the ground and exacerbate erosion.

The practice of sand-ploughing on the shore to clean the plough can have damaging effects both on eel-grass beds and on invertebrates in the sand. Recovery from this seemingly harmless activity can take years in some situations.

Run-off and effluent can affect water quality.

COMMERCIAL FISHING

Potting takes place mainly in the Narrows and the periphery of the Lough, outside the *M. modiolus* exclusion zone. This activity brings some employment to the rural area, is culturally embedded in the community and could have wider benefits by being aligned more closely with the tourism industry and the move to promote locally produced and caught food. There is pot fishing of Dublin Bay Prawns, Brown Crabs, Velvet Swimming Crabs, Common Whelks and Lobsters.

Mechanical harvesting of cockles has been banned to protect mud and sandflats. Cockles are gathered by hand raking the sediment. Winkles are collected on a commercial scale as well as for personal consumption.

Commercial Fishing Issues Relevant to the Conservation Features.

Work is ongoing to implement a management plan for the Pot Fishery to ensure that it is environmentally and economically sustainable in to the future, as a source of income for fishermen, for its potential with respect to the hospitality industry and as part of the cultural identity of the area.

Trawling and dredging have been banned in Strangford Lough as part of the programme to protect and restore *M modiolus* communities.

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Small-scale collection of shellfish for home consumption causes little overall disruption to the Lough's ecological balance. However there are concerns that commercial harvesting may cause disturbance to birds and seals and damages intertidal habitat.

SEAWEED HARVESTING AND CULTIVATION

Historically in Strangford Lough seaweeds have been both harvested and cultured. Drift wrack and kelps were used on the land as fertiliser and knotted wrack was burned to produce a powder used in glass making. At certain sites, for example around Greyabbey, large boulders were placed on sandy areas of shore for seaweeds to attach and create a crop of material. Dulse has also been cut from the stipes of kelp, on which it grows, particularly in the Narrows.

Today, seaweed cultivation mainly takes place for research purposes.

Seaweed Harvesting and Cultivation Issues Relevant to the Conservation Features.

Extensive commercial exploitation of seaweed would significantly alter populations and the ecosystem.

Seaweed cultivation does not come under the fisheries legislation for licensing aquaculture – this may need to be reviewed in the future but in the interim it is controlled through Marine Licencing.

AQUACULTURE

Shellfish cultivation is managed through licences administered by DAERA Marine & Fisheries Division. A number of different techniques are used. Oysters, mussels and scallops can be grown in mesh sacks on trestles at low water and mussels are also rope grown.

A high standard of water quality is required and no chemicals or antibiotics are used in shellfish production.

The use of triploid, infertile stock is now a requirement of licences.

Aquaculture Issues Relevant to the Conservation Features

Pacific Oysters have spread outside cultivated areas and the future implications of this are as yet unknown.

Aquaculture can cause loss or modification of habitat, shadowing effects on the seabed, disruption of sediment movement and disturbance to birds and seals.

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Care has to be taken to avoid the accidental introductions of other species with commercial shellfish.

Predator control methods may need to be assessed in the future.

Caged fin-fish farming is considered inappropriate for Strangford Lough.

TECHNOLOGY AND RESEARCH

The Lough provides a natural laboratory for carrying out marine biological and oceanographic research and this is evident from the number and diversity of research projects that it supports.

In recent years it has become a centre for experimental tidal energy devices because of its unusually strong tides and sheltered conditions and also for international work on macro algae growing for industry.

Issues relevant to Technology and Research

This work is subject to Marine Licencing but small scale research does not necessarily require a Marine Licence.

EDUCATION AND FIELD STUDIES

Strangford Lough is much used for field studies at all levels of education. Generally these activities have little lasting impact on the Lough's ecology.

Education and Field Studies Issues Relevant to the Conservation Features

Education and field studies groups can generally easily avoid disturbance to birds and seals.

Repeated species collection or overturning boulders at favoured sites may lead to local damage and depletion of species in that area.

3.5 EXISTING LEGAL AND MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK, INCLUDING TENURE AND OWNERSHIP

CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Conservation Objectives for the SAC and SPA have been drawn up by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) to provide guidance to relevant and competent authorities on the management of any activities or issues that might adversely affect the Strangford Lough Marine Protected Area (MPA).

This assists those authorities in fulfilling their statutory responsibilities as set out by the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995, better known as the Habitats Regulations, and other relevant legislation.

All public bodies are required by law to ensure that they manage their activities in such a way as to conserve the Conservation Features when they are exercising their functions.

In Strangford Lough most of the related functions relate to DAERA, Northern Ireland Environment Agency, Department for Infrastructure (Planning), Ards and North Down Borough Council Borough Council, and Newry, Mourne and Down District Council.

The majority of both the foreshore and the seabed of Strangford Lough are owned by the Crown Estate or are owned or leased by The National Trust.

All relevant plans and strategies must undergo a Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) to determine if could be damaging and to identify any mitigating measures that may be required.

IMPLICATIONS FOR LOCAL COUNCILS AND OTHER AUTHORITIES

Under the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 as amended, local councils are considered 'competent authorities' and they must ensure plans and projects likely to have a significant effect on Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protected Areas and internationally designated Ramsar sites are appropriately assessed.

On 1st April 2015, Councils became responsible for development planning including the majority of planning decisions.

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The Shared Environmental Services (SES) were established by the then Department of the Environment to undertake Habitats Regulations Assessments (HRA) on behalf of all of the new councils, with regard to planning.

SES should be regarded as an internal consultee to councils, working on behalf of the Council to ensure that any planning decision is consistent with the requirements of the Regulations. SES does this by carrying out HRAs for planning applications and the preparation of Local Development Plans.

This work is funded by central government. SES is also providing a service to several councils under Service Level Agreements to undertake Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for Local Development Plans.

Local councils have many areas of responsibility relevant to the management of Strangford Lough:

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

- Ownership and management of associated car parks and access at Kircubbin, Floodgates (Newtownards), Cuningburn, Island Hill and Whiterock.
- Ownership of Cook St Quay
- Emergency Pollution Incident Response
- Environmental Health Registration of shore based shellfish harvestors and Registration Documents
- Active and healthy communities - grants and joint projects, Community Plan, Village plans
- Economic regeneration and rural development
- Litter and dumping control
- Local Biodiversity Action Plans
- Planning: decisions on the majority of planning applications; enforcing breaches of planning permission; Local Development Plan / land use. (*Also tree preservation orders; protecting and preserving built heritage relevant to the AONB*)
- Tourism Development

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- Outdoor recreation development and access
- Lights Authority on the Lough in conjunction with Newry , Mourne and Down District Council and DFI (inspected by Commissioners of Irish Lights)

NEWRY, MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

As per Ards and North Down but with different land holdings / access, listed below

- Ownership, management, access control and potential Bathing Water beach operator at Kilclief beach and car park
- Ownership, management, access control and potential Bathing Water beach operator at Ballyhornan beach and car park
- Ownership and access control at Delamont Country Park
- Access Strangford Green

SES are only contracted relevant to Planning and their service does not cover local council projects and plans, for example the development of a walking trail. For such activities the local councils must either enter into an additional Service Level Agreement with SES at additional cost, or undertake the HRA themselves using in-house expertise, or commission the HRA externally.

DAERA AND THE NIEA RESPONSIBILITIES RELEVANT TO STRANGFORD LOUGH MPA

- Preparing the Conservation Objectives and related advice
- Marine Licensing
- Fisheries Management
- Mariculture Management

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- Maritime archaeology
- Environmental designations – all of the above and Bathing Waters
- Environmental monitoring, data analysis and reporting – species , habitats and water quality either directly or through contracts and grants
- Shellfish Waters Classification
- Emergency Pollution Incident Response
- Ownership and management of Killard Nature Reserve and Ballyquintin Nature Reserve, Quoile Pondage, Cloghy Rocks
- Marine Protected Area network
- River Basin Catchment Planning
- Support for AONB management which overlaps with the MPA
- Water Quality Unit: domestic consents, industrial consents, sewage regulation, water abstraction and impoundment, water pollution and prevention

DEPARTMENT FOR INFRASTRUCTURE / RIVERS AGENCY

- Strangford Lough Ferry Service (harbour authority) and control of quay access
- Roads management and development / traffic flow
- A20, A2, seawalls maintenance
- Quoile Barrier and other flood defences

NI WATER

NI Water is a government owned company and is the sole provider of water and sewerage services in Northern Ireland.

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ROLE OF STAKEHOLDERS STRANGFORD LOUGH AND LECALÉ PARTNERSHIP (SLLP)

Statutory bodies have legal responsibilities relevant to the Marine Protected Area. However, local people, landowners, farmers, fishermen, clubs, conservation bodies and Lough users have an equally important role to play.

Many activities including most outdoor recreation pursuits are unregulated and require voluntary co-operation to ensure that they remain sustainable and even activities that are regulated can be difficult to monitor and require a degree of trust and support with regard to compliance. New initiatives can also require a groundswell of local support for their success and many rely on local volunteers for their delivery.

The Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership (SLLP) is the main mechanism for stakeholder engagement and collaboration across the two local council areas for the AONB and the MPA. Its work is supported by DAERA.

THE NATIONAL TRUST

The National Trust come under the SLLP stakeholder umbrella but have a unique position in terms of their extensive ownership and leasehold and their long term commitment to working with DAERA on monitoring and conservation initiatives directly and through their tenants.

Over 6000 hectares of foreshore and seabed, 50 islands in the Lough, adjacent wetlands and woodlands and a number of car parks and picnic sites are now owned or leased and cared for by the National Trust. This amounts to about half the shores being in Trust ownership with a further quarter on a full lease from the Crown Estate Commissioners.

The National Trust's role in wardening includes carrying out bird counts and a variety of conservation and educational activities. Many of these activities meet objectives within the Management Scheme. The National Trust holds the sporting rights to most of the intertidal area. They have a covenant with the British Association for Shooting and Conservation, BASC for its **Strangford Lough Wildlife Scheme** to maintain a balance between shooting and nature conservation. The Trust operates a refuge/shooting permit scheme to regulate wildfowling and benefit other wildlife. This is combined with practical habitat management for wintering and nesting birds, in which wildfowling club members participate. The five wildfowling clubs around the Lough co-ordinate their activities through the Joint Council of Strangford Lough Wildfowling Associations. Bag returns provide information on the numbers and species of birds shot and their location.

The Trust is currently preparing an **SAC / SPA Action Plan** which will inform their wildlife monitoring and conservation work into the future. In the meantime their team of rangers continue to work to eradicate invasive species and manage coastal habitat for wildlife. They are also engaged in monitoring overwintering birds, litter reduction and public communication.

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CROWN ESTATE

The majority of both the foreshore and the seabed of the Strangford Lough is owned by the Crown Estate Commissioners on behalf of the Crown. The Commissioners lease areas for commercial, leisure and other uses subject to Marine Licensing requirements. Extensive areas of foreshore and some of seabed are owned or leased by the National Trust and some by the NIEA. The Commissioners own most mineral rights in the SAC/SPA. Other mineral rights are, in some areas, associated with foreshore which was formerly part of large estates

The Crown, as " Government", holds inalienable rights in trust for the public in relation to foreshore, seabed and inshore water.

These include rights of free navigation (to sail, anchor and move goods and passengers) and rights to take commercial fish species including shellfish and bait but excepting farmed stock, oysters and mussels in beds, and to spread nets out to dry on the shore.

There is no actual right of the public to be on Crown foreshore except for the purposes of exercising rights of navigating and fishing. However, the Crown Estate Commissioners normally place no restriction on access for amenity and recreational purposes over their tidal lands and there is a perceived right of access over the foreshore owned by the Crown. This does not extend to right of access over private foreshore or over private land to reach Crown foreshore.

HM Coastguard play a practical role in emergency pollution incident situations, they contribute their detailed knowledge of the coast, including relatively inaccessible areas, as well as performing their role in navigational safety and Search and Rescue activities.

OTHER TENURE AND RIGHTS

Many of the islands, and most of the land that surrounds the Lough is in private ownership. Some estates still have seabed holdings eg the De Ros Estate off Strangford. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) purchased the east side of Castleward Bay in 1989 as a Reserve for birds.

Farmers and other landowners are represented on the SLLP Committee through farming organisations and the County Down Rural Community Network. They are also individually and formally engaged in managing the coast through ASSI management agreements, and agricultural policy relevant to river basin catchment management and conservation. They can also control access across their land.

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council also lease or own some shore and foreshore.

Both local councils control public access to the water through their adjacent car parks, Cook Street Pier and Delamont Country Park.

Sailing Clubs control most of the other key access points for water craft.

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Many people with land holdings around or close to Strangford Lough claim rights to take seaweed, and / or gravel. These are generally written into title deeds.

Common law rights have been established for the collection of wild shellfish and for digging bait for fishing.

DESIGNATIONS AND EXISTING MEASURES

Marine Act 2013 - Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ)

The former Strangford Lough Marine Nature Reserve automatically became an MCZ under the Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013 (the "Act"). This designation safeguards vulnerable or unique marine species and habitats and geological/geomorphological features of national importance in the Northern Ireland inshore region based on an ecosystem approach, while fully taking into account any economic, cultural or social consequences.

These MCZs fulfil the obligations in the Act to contribute to an ecologically coherent UK network of MPAs as well as wider biodiversity commitments at European and global level.

*The Act also allows the Department to make **byelaws to protect MCZs** from damage caused by unregulated activities such as anchoring, kite surfing, jet skiing etc. It is an offence to intentionally or recklessly destroy or damage a protected feature of an MCZ or to contravene a byelaw.*

The following conservation lists were amalgamated and reviewed to create three lists of Priority Marine Features (PMF):

- *OSPAR List of Threatened and/or Declining Species and Habitats*
- *UK Biodiversity Action Plan List*
- *Northern Ireland List of Priority Habitats and Species*
- *Northern Ireland Species of Conservation Concern (SOCC)*
- *Nationally Important Marine Features (NIMF)*

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Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009(a),

Under this act section 113(6)(b) DAERA (Marine and Fisheries Division) is the marine licence authority for any construction and removal, dredging and sea disposal on the seabed. The overall objective of marine licensing is to regulate sustainable development in a cohesive and fair manner.

The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995, as amended

The Habitats Regulations make relevant and competent authorities responsible for the conservation and management of Marine Protected Areas.

Relevant and competent authorities have certain specific statutory functions to decide on applications for consents, licences and permissions. The Regulations establish the procedures that must be followed for the consideration of plans or projects. These procedures include a provision for an assessment if the effect of the plan or project is likely to be significant – a Habitats Regulations Assessment. The advice of DAERA must be taken into account during this process.

The decision to go ahead with a plan or project must meet the requirements of Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive. In particular, it must be documented that:

- 1 The alternative put forward for approval, is the least damaging for habitats, for species and for the integrity of the Natura 2000 site, regardless of economic considerations, and that no other feasible alternative, exists that would not affect the integrity of the site.
- 2 There are imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including 'those of a social or economic nature'. Being an exception to Article 6(3), this provision can only be applied to circumstances where all the conditions required by the Directive are fully satisfied. In this regard, it falls on whoever wants to make use of this exception to prove, as a prerequisite, that the aforementioned conditions do indeed exist in each particular case.
- 3 Once the lack of suitable alternatives and the acceptance of imperative reasons of overriding public interest are fully ascertained and documented, all compensatory measures that are needed to ensure the protection of the overall coherence of the Natura 2000 network have to be taken. Therefore, compensatory measures should be considered only when the application of other safeguards, such as mitigation measures, is not sufficient.

The Regulations also place a duty on competent authorities to review, subject to certain limitations, any extant consents, licences or permissions which are likely to have a significant effect on a Marine Protected Area.

Both the consideration of new development proposals and the review of existing consents is informed by the Conservation Objectives.

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Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (NI) Order 1985 and its subsequent 1989 amendment (NCALO)

This Order is the relevant statute for Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs) which represent the main form of domestic statutory protection for sites of high nature conservation value.

Management of ASSI lands (including intertidal zones) is achieved through co-operation; landowners retain ownership and occupancy of their land, and are usually encouraged to manage it as they have done in the past. DAERA recognises that there is a need to promote a more positive approach to ASSI management through increased contact with owners and occupiers and greater targeting of incentives to encourage enhancement as well as protection of sites.

ASSI legislation allows DAERA to take action against owners, occupiers and third parties if damaging operations are carried out without seeking prior consent.

Under this order the Secretary of State introduced the **Regulation of Anchoring, Mooring, and Diving Byelaws 2012** which prohibited these activities in the *M modiolus* Restricted Zone.

Under this Order **National Nature Reserves (NNRs)** were established, at sites of high importance for nature conservation, and which may also be valuable for education or research. Management of NNRs is undertaken primarily to benefit the nature conservation interests and public access may be controlled. There are seven NNRs on or adjoining Strangford Lough: North Strangford Lough, the Dorn, Granagh Bay, Ballyquintin Point, Killard, Cloghy Rocks and Quoile Pondage. DAERA manages all but North Strangford Lough which the National Trust owns and manages.

The Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985

Certain species of plants and animals are protected by law. The Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (the Order) and amendment The Wildlife (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 prohibits the intentional killing, taking or injuring of certain wild birds or nests and wild animals or the intentional destruction, uprooting or picking of wild flowers.

The Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (WANE act) amended the Wildlife Order by giving protection to a wider range of plants, animals and birds, and providing additional enforcement powers and increased penalties for wildlife related offences. The Act also introduced a statutory duty on all public bodies to further the conservation of biodiversity.

The Environment (Northern Ireland) Order 2002.

Deals with pollution prevention control and regulation of polluting activities. It cover waste management and disposal , air quality and the management of ASSIs,

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The Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011

Protects the welfare of wild and farmed animal.

The Spring Traps Approval Order (Northern Ireland) 2012

Specifies which traps are permissible under the Wildlife Order.

The Environmental Protection (Restriction on Use of Lead Shot) Regulations (NI) 2009

Under these regulations lead shot may not be used over any welland area.

Fisheries Act (NI) 1966, as amended 2001,

Under this Act DAERA, is responsible for the management and regulation of fisheries and for fostering the development of fisheries and can also regulate commercial fishing in NI inshore waters (which includes the intertidal zone) for environmental purposes.

Inshore Fishing (Prohibiting of Fishing and Fishing Methods) Regulations (NI) 1993,

These regulations are primarily aimed at protecting the fisheries of the Lough while maximising the scope of the existing fisheries legislative base to reconcile fishing and conservation. Trawling and dredging were banned in the Lough in 2013 to protect remaining horse mussel beds.

Strangford Lough (Sea Fishing Exclusion Zones) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012

These prohibit all fishing for sea-fish by any sea-fishing boat within the two zones in Strangford Lough specified in the Schedule at a depth of 10 metres or more below Chart Datum. This does not apply to fishing for sea-fish by rod and line. It mainly affects pot fishing. There are also minimum landing sizes for lobster, brown crab, and velvet crab.

Strangford Lough (Prohibition of Fishing for Shellfish Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2001. Mechanical harvesting of shellfish is banned under these regulations

Marine aquaculture is licensed by the Marine & Fisheries Division of DAERA. Regulation is achieved through fish culture licences and shellfish fishery licences.

Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy / Biodiversity Convention in 1992

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This Convention commits the UK and other signatories to develop national strategies for biodiversity conservation. The NI Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 and local Action Plans covers forty NI priority habitats including coastal saltmarsh, mudflats, seagrass beds and Horse Mussel beds. UK priority species or species groups which occur in Northern Ireland include Native Oyster and the seaweed *Ascophyllum nodosum ecad mackii*.

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The Strangford and Lecale AONB was designated in 2010 under the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands Act (Northern Ireland) 1965. It includes the intertidal part of the MPA and adjacent land and islands. It is essentially concerned with conservation and enjoyment of landscapes, heritage and wildlife and the promotion of public access. Planners are required to take account of this designation and the related Landscape Character Assessments.

Access to the Countryside (NI) Order 1983 Countryside Access

This Act places responsibility for the provision and maintenance of controlled access to the open countryside with district councils. This legislation enables councils to assert public rights of way and to create new access opportunities through public path and access agreements. DAERA supports and facilitates this role through grant aiding practical works, through advice and training, and with respect to aspects of the legislation such as the holding of public enquiries. While mainly used for paths and trails, NMDDC have cited this Order as part of the rationale for proposing a floating pontoon in the Quoile Estuary.

The Regional Development Strategy 2035, and regional Planning Policy Statements

These provide a strategic policy framework for Local Development Plans being produced by local councils. The Strategy recognises the importance of conserving high quality environments such as Strangford Lough while promoting a strong and diversified rural economy and sustainable, environmentally sensitive tourism.

From May 2016 central government planning functions transferred to the new Department for Infrastructure (DfI).

Planning Policy for the Strangford Lough area is set out in the Ards and Down Area Plan 2015.

Planning policy relating to sites of conservation value is spelt out in Planning and Nature Conservation (PPS2) published by the Planning Service.

Ards and North Down Borough Council and Newry Mourne and Down District Council are responsible for **planning applications** relevant to Strangford Lough and for the development of **Local Development Plans**.

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<p><i>PPS 2: Planning and Nature Conservation</i> <i>PPS 3: Access, Movement and Parking</i> <i>PPS 4: Planning and Economic Development</i> <i>PPS 6: Planning, Archaeology and The Built Heritage</i></p>	<p><i>PPS 6 (Addendum): Areas of Townscape Character</i> <i>PPS 8: Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation</i> <i>PPS 12: Housing in Settlements</i> <i>PPS 9: The Enforcement of Planning Control</i></p>	<p><i>PPS 11: Planning and Waste Management</i> <i>PPS 13: Transportation and Land Use</i> <i>PPS 15: Planning and Flood Risk</i> <i>PPS 16: Tourism</i> <i>PPS 18: Renewable Energy</i> <i>PPS 21: Sustainable Development in the countryside</i></p>
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Planning (General Development Procedure) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 as amended

The main purpose of this Statutory Rule is to transfer the necessary powers required to operate the planning system currently contained within the Planning (General Development) Order 1993 (the 1993 GDO) to the councils. It also introduces some new provisions, namely: Design and access statements for major applications; Non-material changes to a previous grant of planning permission; Publicity of applications for planning permission; and Changes to the statutory consultation process.

Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015

These Regulations revoke and replace the Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 ("the 2012 Regulations"). They are being made to implement Directive 2011/92/EU1 in respect of the new two-tier planning system under the Planning (Northern Ireland) Act 2011. 3. The EIA Directive aims to ensure that a planning authority giving consent for a project makes its decision with the full knowledge of any likely significant effects on the environment by setting out a procedure known as environmental impact assessment to assess such effects.

The Ards and Down Area Plan 2015 recognises the Ards Peninsula as Green Bell and Bangor and Newtownards as significant growth areas.

Water Framework Directive

Under this directive River Basin Management takes an integrated approach to the protection, improvement and sustainable use of the water environment. It applies to groundwater and to all surface water bodies, including rivers, lakes, transitional (estuarine) and coastal waters out to one nautical mile.

Strangford Lough comes under the North Eastern River Basin District for river basin catchment planning. Specific catchments will be targetted and resources prioritised to achieve Water Framework Directive objectives through a series of partnership projects, investigations and catchment walks.

Reagh Bay, Marlfield Bay and Skate Rock are designated **Shellfish Water Protected Areas** and may be protected or improved so as to support shellfish life and growth and meet at least Class B FSA in NI Classification status.

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The Food Standards Agency in NI is responsible for the implementation of Classification and monitoring programmes for shellfish for the protection of public health.

Regulation (EC) No 853 / 2004 & No 854 /2004

Under food hygiene controls, shore based shellfish collectors are classed as food process operators and as such are required to reach certain standards to market their product. Winkles must be sold through an approved establishment. Harvestors are required to register with their Local Council Environmental Health Department and Registration documents should accompany the catch to its final destination. The regulations also require that samples are tested regularly, mainly for *E coli*.

Bivalve Mollusc Production Areas: Food safety regulations introduced in 1993 lay down the health conditions for the production and the placing on the market of live bivalve molluscs. All farmed shellfish beds must now be classified according to water quality. Six areas in Strangford Lough have been so classified, three as Class A enabling direct sale of shellfish and three as Class B under which shellfish must be depurated or re-laid in a Class A area for a period prior to offering for sale.

The Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive sets minimum standards for sewerage and sewage treatment and some industrial dischargers.

Duty for Sustainable Development

Section 75 Northern Ireland Act and Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006

Voluntary Management Initiatives

Most outdoor recreation is unregulated and relies heavily on voluntary initiatives and innovative management to ensure environmental sustainability.

3.6 THREAT AND CONFLICT ANALYSIS

The 'concept' of sensitivity has been developed over many decades and applied in coastal and marine habitats. Numerous approaches have been developed, applied at a range of spatial scales, and to a variety of management questions (see Roberts *et al.*, 2010). Tillin and Hull (2012-2013), introduced a detailed evaluation and audit trail of evidence on which to base the sensitivity assessments, termed **Marine Evidence-based Sensitivity Assessment (MarESA)** which has been applied where possible to create a pressure vs. feature sensitivity matrix.

The MarESA assessments of biotope sensitivity are generic and not site specific. They are based on the likely effects of a pressure on a 'hypothetical' population in the middle of its 'environmental range'.

DAERA provided the list of known biotopes associated with these features to inform this Assessment. This is not a comprehensive list but is based on the best available information from surveys for example no biotopes were supplied for the Dorn Coastal Lagoon.

Equally for some biotopes no MarESA sensitivity assessment was available.

The draft MarESA assessment is available as an attachment to this document and online on www.strangfordlough.org.

The effect of human activities or other factors with the potential to affect the conservation status of the features depends on the sensitivity of the features component species, their vulnerability and their exposure to the threat or pressure.

This has been overlaid with information on the site to establish exposure and vulnerability and therefore the overall risk to the Feature from that activity or pressure.

However this Scheme has not had the resources to review all related scientific research and in many cases there is insufficient data or evidence on the operations and human interactions with the Features.

The SAC and SPA tables of Potential Threats and Pressures and the Marine Evidence-based Sensitivity Assessment (MarESA) assessment Section 8 Appendix 1 are draft only. Further discussion, peer review and referencing are required to agree the levels of Exposure, Vulnerability and Risk and the related Management Measures proposed in this Scheme.

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Term	Definition
Sensitivity	The intolerance of a species or habitat to damage from an external factor and the time taken for its subsequent recovery. Laffoley et al (2000) Tyler-Walters & Hiscock (2005)
	The likelihood of change when a pressure is applied to a feature (receptor) and is a function of the ability of the feature to tolerate or resist change (resistance) and its ability to recover from impact (resilience). Tillin et al (2010), Tillin & Hull (2003), Tillin & Tyler-Walters (2014)
Vulnerability	Vulnerability is a measure of the degree of exposure of a receptor to a pressure to which it is sensitive. Based on Hiscock et al 1999.
Pressure	The mechanism through which an activity has an effect on any part of the ecosystem. The nature of the pressure is determined by activity type, intensity and distribution. Robinson et al (2008)
Exposure	The action of a pressure on a receptor, with regard to the extent, magnitude and duration of the pressure. Robinson et al (2008)

“Risk” has been assessed by considering the vulnerability of the feature, the context and the efficacy of existing management measures.

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SAC FEATURES

Feature	Condition	Year of assessment Report	Potential Pressures and Threats	Sensitivity	Exposure	Vulnerability	Risk	Existing Legislation / Management Measures and Relevant / Competent Authority	Comments and Potential New Measures – to be discussed and agreed by Management Group
Mudflats and sandflats not covered by sea water at low tide	Favourable	2008	Housing and Industrial Development – leading to erosion effects or changes in water levels	H	M	H	M	Marine Licensing process - DAERA Local Development Plan - Local Councils Planning Applications - Local Councils	Measures are in place and their effectiveness will depend on their application. Strategic environmental assessment to be applied.

			<p>Climate change – sea level rise and related coastal defences</p>	H	H	H	H		<p>Working Group to identify local issues and encourage integrated approach</p> <p>Inform Regional plans and Local Development Plans and Community Plans (DAERA) .</p> <p>Commission research into species and habitat changes due to climate change and monitor change</p> <p>Continue to record change along the coast</p> <p>Community Plans and Local Development Plans take into account the current and future threat Ensure Planning decisions mitigate</p> <p>NT Shifting Shore recommendations</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Coastal adaptation strategies to inform community engagement and decision making 2. Provide training on coastal change management and adaptation to ensure our 3. people have the right knowledge and skills. 3. Empower local authorities to lead on coastal adaptation – ensuring they have the right policies, tools and resources to achieve this 4. Develop a consistent Coastal Vision for sustainable management at both regional and local levels – linking the needs of people and nature 5. Review how coastal groups (such as coastal forums) can best work and be effective in supporting governments and the relevant agencies at all levels 6. Support innovation in coastal risk management – so that those at risk of flooding or erosion have a wider range of choices to manage their risk – a Pathfinder approach 7. Maintain active and on-going engagement with coastal communities at risk
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			Climate change – storminess, change in wind direction, realignment of sediment, temperature change	H	H	H	H		As above
			Coastal Engineering (e.g. sea defence works) – leading to erosion effects or changes in water levels	H	H	H	H	Marine Licensing – DAERA Marine Planning - Local Development Plan – Local Council	As above
			Sand and Gravel Extraction	H	L	L	L	Marine Licensing - DAERA	Currently no further action required
			Shellfish farming can cause shadowing and changes in habitat which subsequently impacts on wading birds	M	M	M	M	Aquaculture licensing - DAERA	Develop aquaculture strategy
			Agriculture – leading to eutrophication or turbidity. One effect of this can be to increase growth of <i>enteromorpha</i> which in turn smothers <i>Zostera</i>	M	M	M	M	The Nitrates Action Programme (Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 – DAERA The Phosphorous (Use in Agriculture) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 – DAERA Action under water Framework Directive Plans	Review effectiveness of ASSI Management Closer liaison with farmers Identify specific farm sources and address

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			Sand Ploughing	M	L	L	L	ASSI Management	Does not appear to be a problem currently no action required.
			Horse riding / trampling could damage to <i>Zostera</i> beds. Not causing concern at present.	H	L	L	L	Liaison with relevant horse owners and Association	NT Continued liaison with owners Continued assessment of <i>Zostera</i> Audit and update of Out and About signage SLLP
			Invasive / Alien species <i>Spartina</i>	H	H	H	H	<i>Spartina</i> eradication programme - the National Trust has had a degree of success in eradicating <i>Spartina</i> from Newtownards to Grey Abbey and they are now working down to Kircubbin. <i>Spartina</i> control group in place.	Recommendations from the National Trust Conservation Action Plan to be implemented. A complete survey of <i>Spartina</i> across the whole MPA This should be followed up with a spraying programme covering all areas and not limited to NT ownership. Monitoring this feature needs to include monitoring of <i>Spartina</i> at the upper end of the intertidal and a subsequent review of the Condition Assessment .
			Other invasive species	?	?	?	?		Recreation management under the AONB Action Plan subject to HRA. Includes potential need for wash-down facilities for boats and "port" / access management

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<p>Reef – <i>M modiolus</i> communities</p>	<p>Unfavourable</p>	<p>2008</p>	<p>Damage or loss of feature through mobile gear fishing</p>	<p>H</p>	<p>L</p>	<p>L</p>	<p>L</p>	<p>Ban on mobile gear throughout the Lough - DAERA</p> <p>The Strangford Lough (Sea Fishing Exclusion Zones) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 No.441 – fishing at a depth of 10m or more below chart datum within zones 1 and 2 is prohibited. - DAERA</p> <p>The Inshore Fishing (Prohibition of Fishing and Fishing Methods) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1993 [SR 1993 No.155] as amended. DAERA</p> <p>A <i>Modiolus</i> Restoration Working Group has been established .</p>	<p>On-going monitoring including Spyball video surveys on identified clumps</p> <p>Any means to restore the Feature under continual review through the <i>M modiolus</i> Restoration Group.</p> <p>The conservation of the <i>M modiolus</i> reef off the Outer Ards coast may be important to the restoration of the feature in Strangford lough as it is possible that there is larval interchange between the two sites though this has not yet been proven.</p>
			<p>Siltation caused by development</p>	<p>H</p>	<p>L</p>	<p>L</p>	<p>L</p>	<p>LDP – Local councils Planning applications – Local councils Marine Licensing – DAERA</p>	
			<p>Boating and sailing – damage from anchors</p>	<p>M</p>	<p>L</p>	<p>L</p>	<p>L</p>	<p>Strangford Lough Regulation of Anchoring, Mooring and Diving Byelaws 2012. DAERA ban on anchoring in exclusion zone</p>	<p>Maintain</p>

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			Dive collection	M	L	L	L	Strangford Lough Regulation of Anchoring, Mooring and Diving Byelaws 2012. DAERA ban on diving in exclusion zone	
Large shallow inlets and bays	Favourable	2008	<p>WWTWs and Agriculture sources – leading to eutrophication or turbidity</p> <p>Coastal engineering</p> <p>Subtidal power</p> <p>Moorings</p>	M	M	M	M	<p>The Nitrates Action Programme (Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015</p> <p>The Phosphorous (Use in Agriculture) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014.</p> <p>Marine Licensing</p>	<p>Maintain existing measures</p> <p>River Basin Catchment Management</p>
			Climate change – sea level rise, coastal squeeze	H	H	H	H		See Mudflats and sandflats
			Climate change – storminess, change in wind direction, realignment of sediment, temperature change	H	H	H	H		See Mudflats and sandflats
Coastal lagoons	Favourable but concerns for deterioration		WWTWs and Agriculture sources – leading to eutrophication or turbidity – the Dorn is highly sensitive	H	H	H	H	<p>The Nitrates Action Programme (Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 and The Phosphorous (Use in Agriculture) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014.</p> <p>ASSI Management</p>	<p>Identify coastal lagoon biotopes in Strangford Lough and apply MarESA assessment.</p> <p>Conduct an investigation into the decline in emergent subtidal species at the Dorn sill</p>

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			Shore based shellfish collection – removal and damage	H	H	H	H		
Atlantic salt meadows	Unfavourable	2013	Invasive alien species <i>Spartina</i>	H	H	H	H	Eradication programme. <i>Spartina</i> spraying co-ordinated by <i>Spartina</i> Management Group	<p>Survey of <i>Spartina</i> across the whole MPA.</p> <p>Follow this up with a spraying programme covering all areas and not limited to NT ownership.</p> <p>Monitoring this feature needs to include monitoring of <i>Spartina</i> at the upper end of the intertidal and</p> <p>NT lease a third of the area around the Lough and concentrate on managing this area, but this needs to be coordinated to the other two thirds</p>
			Climate change – sea level rise	H	H	H	H		See Mudflats and sandflats
			Climate change – storminess, change in wind direction, realignment of sediment, temperature change	H	H	H	H		See Mudflats and sandflats
			Grazing and land poaching / trampling (some grazing may be desirable?)	H	H	H	H	ASSI Management.	<p>Ongoing liaison with landowners</p> <p>Consider implications of any future changes in single farm payment s</p> <p>Review effectiveness of ASSI Management and potential for capacity building</p>
			Introduction of physical constraints that could affect mobility						As above

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Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand	Unfavourable	2013	As for Atlantic salt Meadows					As for Atlantic salt Meadows	As for Atlantic salt Meadows
Annual vegetation of driftlines	Favourable	2003	No MarESA available						Cross reference with NT SAC Action Plan
			Removal of material ? Human induced developments?						
Perennial vegetation of stony banks Note: feature lies above the HMW but should still be considered within overall scheme of management	Unfavourable	2013	No MarESA available Lack of grazing and scrub encroachment ? Removal of material ?? NEED CLARIFICATION ON CAUSES	H	M	M	M	ASSI Agreements – DAERA Conservation Objectives refer only to Gransha and Ballyquintin	Review effectiveness of ASSI Management and potential for capacity building Consider NT Conservation Action Plan recommendations Liaison with landowners

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Harbour (Common) Seals	Favourable	2008	Tourism and recreation – leading to disturbance, especially during pupping season	H	M	M	M	<p>Programme of publications, signage, community initiatives, talks, tours – SLLP / NT</p> <p>SLLP WiSe Scheme training and accreditation to operators of registered passenger and charter vessels, service and support boats</p> <p>Event management HRA process – Local Councils</p>	<p>Recreation management under the AONB Action Plan subject to HRA, Includes WiSe and other initiatives</p> <p>Continue existing initiatives</p> <p>Audit and update of Out and About signage</p>
			Disease – Phocine distemper	H	L	L	L	Disease usually associated with high numbers / high contagion	
			Wildfowling – leading to disturbance	H	L	L	L	National Trust / Clubs agreements	Recommendations from forthcoming National Trust proposed SAC / SPA Conservation Action Plan
			Housing and Industrial Development – leading to disturbance	H	L	L	L	<p>Marine Licensing DAERA</p> <p>Planning requirements – local councils</p>	No further action required at this time
			Shore based shellfish/bait collection – leading to disturbance (cf research findings Carlingford Lough), especially during pupping	H	M	M	M	Requirement for processors to identify collection areas – local councils	DAERA to introduce measures wrt the management of shore based shellfish collection regionally, taking on board the SLLP Report on shellfish collection

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			Spiral Injuries on washed up seals may have been caused by predation on Common seals by Grey Seals, and not as a result of certain types of boat engine inflicting damage. 100 grey seal pups born in the lough over the past breeding season. This is learned behaviour and appears to have only been a problem for a period of time. Action would only be required if it reoccurs	H	L	L	L	Monitoring	There are research proposals for along NI coast - GPS tracking / mobility of populations. Exploris / Queens University are working in partnership on tracking seal movements and the quality of food available Monitor relationships between grey and Harbour seals
			Lack of food	H	M	M	M	Fisheries Management - DAERA	Further research?

SPA FEATURES

General note : Food supplies, human disturbance, predators and sea level rise are all important factors affecting bird populations and should be monitored. If numbers go down then this should trigger investigation but decline in numbers of any one species might not necessarily demonstrate unfavourable condition of an over wintering site. The aim is to manage conditions to ensure favourable habitats, and that habitats could sustain the species if it wanted to be there.

On a global scale, the decline in overwintering species can be attributed to several reasons such as changes in local conditions, global warming meaning that there is no need to migrate at all for food or shelter or short stopping as conditions along the migratory route change. There may also be new problems along the flyways.

It is important to consider recent trends and not rely on the reported five year mean based assessments as the data is already out of date. Management intervention may be required between reporting cycles.

The threats and pressures listed for overwintering birds are primarily those identified by DAERA in the SPA Conservation Objectives 2015. However it is recommended that these Conservation Objectives are reviewed by DAERA as they contain some inaccuracies eg "there is commercial trawling in the Lough".

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The sensitivity, exposure, vulnerability and risk in this table is a draft only and requires further discussion, peer review and cross reference to the National Trust's SAC Action Plan.

Feature	Condition	CA Year		Sensitivity	Exposure	Vulnerability	Risk	Existing Management Measures	Potential new Management measures
Sandwich Tern	Favourable	2014	Climate change / change of conditions including habitat, With rising sea levels some islands will become less suited to breeding colonies – others may become more suitable	H	H	H	H	None	Identify potential new island nest sites and maintain all sites in suitable condition for use by the birds – DAERA through the NT Involve other landowners as required. As for Sandflats and mudflats
			Climate change phenology of migration and population declines	H	H	H	H	None	Collate info on what is known internationally
			Rats, ferrets, mink, otters and gulls taking eggs / chicks	H	H	H	H	Islands are monitored annually – NT Some predator control – NT Wildlife Order (NI) 1985, as amended, via licensing process - DAERA	Undertake research into the underlying causes (National Trust SAC / SPA Conservation Action Plan (2017)) Maintain existing measures in the interim
			Reduction in available prey through fisheries	H	H	H	H	Fisheries management - DAERA	Await outcome of study above
			Reduction in water quality	M	L	L	L	River Basin Catchment Planning	Await outcome of study above
			Lack of quality grazed habitat	H	M	M	M	The National Trust are managing grazing of islands to provide favourable nesting conditions	Await outcome of study above

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			Housing and Industrial Development – leading to disturbance and loss of breeding habitat	H	L	L	L	Planning permissions Marine Licensing process	
			General recreational disturbance Picnickers on islands can also encourage predators such as gulls and rats	H	M	M	M	NT Education / signage. Wildlife Order (NI) 1985, as amended(when Nesting) SLLP programme of publications and community initiatives	Outdoor recreation management / AONB Plan Reduce any conflict in the tern breeding season. Some areas should remain available for picnickers and trippers. Signage on islands
Common Tern	Unfavourable from 2011-15 data but reported favourable in 2014	2014	As for Sandwich tern					As for Sandwich tern	As for Sandwich tern
Arctic Tern	Favourable	2014	As for Sandwich tern					As for Sandwich tern	As for Sandwich tern

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Golden Plover	Unfavourable from 2011-15 data but reported favourable	2014	Issues with adjacent agricultural feeding grounds? Development / increased use of land on or adjacent to feeding ground at north end of Lough?	H	M	M	M	Planning applications ASSI / MOSS farming schemes?	NT Conservation Action Plan Recommendations Further study needed to direct the Management Scheme Identify key local feeding areas Survey land use at northern end of the lough?
			Issues at breeding grounds?						Collate up to date information on populations at relevant upland breeding grounds / support wider surveys
As for over wintering assemblage See also sandflats and mudflats									
Bar-Tailed Godwit	Favourable	2014							
As for overwintering assemblage See also mudflats and sandflats not covered by sea water at low tide									
Light-bellied Brent Goose			General recreational disturbance Horse riding / trampling – damage to <i>Zostera</i> beds	H	M	M	M	NT / SLLP Communication / Education initiatives	Outdoor Recreation management under AONB Action Plan Audit and update of Out and About signage Recommendations from SportNI, NT, SLLP report on overwintering birds

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	Favourable	2014	Agricultural use as the birds use agricultural land for grazing at the end of the season when <i>Zostera</i> beds are depleted	M	L	L	L	Maintenance of <i>Zostera</i> beds ?	Initiatives with landowners?
As for overwintering assemblage See also Mudflats and sandflats not covered by sea water at low tide									
Shelduck	Favourable	2014							
As for overwintering assemblage See also sandflats and mudflats									
Knot	Unfavourable from 2011-15 data but reported favourable in 2014	2014	Substantial recent decline throughout the UK and Ireland, particularly at western sites. Considered to be largely due to migratory short-stopping related to climate change and low productivity driven by conditions on the breeding grounds (also principally related to climate change).						Collate up to date information on international trends

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As for overwintering assemblage See also Mudflats and sandflats not covered by sea water at low tide									
Redshank	Favourable	2014							
As for overwintering assemblage See also sandflats and mudflats									
Waterfowl Assemblage wintering population (Golden Plover, Bar-tailed Godwit, Light- bellied Brent Goose, Shelduck, Knot, Redshank, Little Grebe, Great Crested Grebe, Cormorant, Greylag Goose, Wigeon, Gadwall, Teal, Mallard, Pintail, Shoveler, Goldeneye, Red-breasted Merganser, Coot, Oystercatcher, Ringed Plover, Grey Plover, Lapwing, Dunlin, Curlew,	Favourable though there has been a decline in some component species	2014	Land management including adjacent habitat Feeding - particularly important for swans and geese. Also golden plover and lapwing. High tide roosts are an essential component of sites hosting waders. Development of adjoining ground or actual traditional roost localities may adversely impact on the sites carrying capacity. Many such sites lie without the site making effective management of developments, other than those for which planning permission is required, difficult	H	H	H	H	Consideration of feeding grounds and roost sites Part of Planning Application Assessment. ASSI Management MOSS Schemes?	Identify key areas and advise Local Councils accordingly Promote site management schemes at ley areas. Consider the collective impact in all assessments .

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Turnstone)		<p>Aquaculture - Disturbance</p> <p>Alteration of natural littoral and sub-littoral communities through seeding, tray/trestle cultivation, dredging/control of pest species.</p> <p>Naturalisation of introduced species – both the shellfish themselves and associated species e.g. algae and disease vectors</p>	H	M	M	M	Licensed through DAERA	Consider cumulative and long term impacts
		<p>Shellfish gathering</p> <p>Shellfish gathering represents a net loss to the system in terms of biomass.</p> <p>Disturbance</p> <p>Damage to boulder communities</p>	H	M	M	M	<p>Commercial shellfish fishery is not recognised and not regulated under fisheries legislation</p> <p>Local council processor permits</p> <p>Non commercial activity not considered to be a major issue</p>	<p>Introduce an effective system of regulation and control, of commercial shellfish collection, taking on board recommendations from the SLLP commissioned report Management of Shore-Based Periwinkle Collection on Strangford Lough & Lecale Coast, 2013. Continue to report Gang activity so that they can be investigated under the Gangmasters Licensing Authority</p> <p>Raise public awareness of the issue</p> <p>Ensure required information on where the shellfish are harvested are filled in by processors.</p>
		<p>Bait digging</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Disturbance - Impact on sediment and invertebrate fauna – may be positive <p>through making deeper prey items available on surface.</p>	M	L	L	L	Unregulated	Recommendations from NT SAC Action Plan

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		<p>Beach sand and gravel extraction.</p> <p>Disturbance issue together with loss of biologically active upper sediments. Most beach systems are sedimentologically closed thus material removed may not be renewed making the activity unsustainable. May lead to changed sediment character of beach ultimately impacting on birds.</p>	H	L	L	L		<p>Ongoing at Killard through exercising permitted rights.</p> <p>Position elsewhere is unclear.</p>
		<p>Outdoor recreation</p> <p>Disturbance.</p>	H	M	M	M	Largely unregulated	<p>Outdoor recreation management / AONB Plan</p> <p>Review and Update O&A signage</p> <p>Recommendations from SportNI, NT and SLLP study</p>
		<p>Coastal protection schemes</p> <p>Where there is no history of this, they impact on natural beach systems with loss of habitat.</p>	H	H	H	H	ASSI Management Planning	<p>Review</p> <p>NT Shifting Shore recommendations</p>
		<p>Habitat extent – intertidal</p> <p>Loss of habitats through development, changes in coastal processes. Loss of inter-tidal habitat is a critical issue as this is the feeding zone for the majority (numbers and species) of birds.</p>	H	H	H	H	Planning process	<p>NT SAC Action Plan recommendation</p> <p>Survey?</p>

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		Habitat quality – intertidal Alteration of habitat quality through diminution of water quality, invasive species or changes in coastal processes	H	M	M	M		See SAC Features
		Introduced species Range of threats from loss of habitat, feeding competition, disease	H	H	H	H		See SAC features
		Recreational activities Disturbance is the main consideration although vehicle access may also lead to beach compaction and impacts on beachhead habitats.	H	M	M	M	NT / SLLP programme of publications signage and community initiatives	Recreation management under AONB Action Plan Audit and update of Out and About signage Recommendations from SportNI, NT, SLLP report
		Research activities Census and ringing activities especially have the potential to impact on bird populations, particularly at breeding sites	H	L	L	L		
		Seaweed harvesting Either cutting living weed or gathering storm debris. The former, depending on scale and frequency, may fundamentally impact on shore communities and their ability to support waterfowl. The latter, represents a net loss to the system in terms of habitat and biomass.	H	L	L	L	Unregulated	Review level of activity and potential need for management

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		<p>System dynamics</p> <p>Cuts across many other issues. Dynamic systems, especially coastal, can be affected by many factors especially engineered structures and significant changes in dominant wind direction or storm frequency. Many systems may indeed still be undergoing responses to historical developments e.g. partial reclamation, seawall construction. Changes may include alteration in sediment grade, shifts in patterns of erosion and deposition etc. Consequences for habitat and species utilisation of the site can be profound.</p>	H	H	H	H		See SAC features
		<p>Wildfowling</p> <p>Has direct effect through bag sizes/bag species and wider disturbance issue. Issue of regulated (through recognised shooting clubs) and ad hoc shooters. Lead shot on grazing lands.</p>	H	L	L	L	NT Wildfowling Scheme Wildlife Order (NI) 1985, as amended.	
		<p>Climate change – storminess, change in wind direction, realignment of sediment, temperature change</p>	H	H	H	H		See SAC Features – Mudflats and Sandflats
		<p>Climate change /change of conditions including habitat and population declines</p>	H	H	H	H		See SAC Features – Mudflats and Sandflats

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			Climate change - Sea level rise	H	H	H	H	Covered by Planning permissions and Marine Licensing process	See SAC Features – Mudflats and Sandflats
			Diffuse pollution to surface waters due to agricultural and forestry activities	H	M	M	M	Nitrates Action Programme (Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 Phosphorous (Use in Agriculture) Regulations (NI) 2014.	North East River Basin Catchment Plan
			Impacts from non-native species	H	M	M	M		NT SAC Action Plan recommendations
			Conflict with wind and tidal energy?	M	L	L	L	Planning application process	
			Change of migration phenology and/or distribution (incl. short-stopping) – eg widgeon and Knot	H	H	H	H		Collate up to date information on international trends
See also threats and pressures relevant to mud flats and sandflats									

3.7 GAPS OF KNOWLEDGE

For species that migrate or are part of metapopulations, changes beyond the confines of Strangford Lough may be responsible for status changes and information needs to be collated on these.

The scale and location of *Spartina* across the whole MPA needs to be surveyed.

Scale and location of Pacific Oysters outside original aquaculture sites

Biotopes to be identified at the Dorn.

MarESA assessment for additional biotopes identified for features.

Broadscale Intertidal monitoring at locations not currently covered.

Review the SPA Conservation Objectives in the light of NT SAC Action Plan recommendations and issues identified through this Scheme

MarESA sensitivity assessments were not available for all of the related biotopes identified in Strangford Lough – when available the assessment should be updated accordingly.

Update research and surveys with respect to the effect of human activities on the features at this site as required.

~~Additional requirements to be identified.~~

4. MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

4.1 Goals and objectives

4.2. Management Group

4.3 Boundaries - maps

4.3 Surveillance and enforcement

4.4 Monitoring and evaluation of plan effectiveness

4.5 Timetable for implementation

4.1 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal 1: Monitor species and habitats to assess / review their condition

Obj 1: DAERA to lead a monitoring programme for all of the Conservation Features which meets the 6 yearly reporting cycle reporting requirements under legislation.

Obj 2: DAERA to report to the Management Group on the features annually, based on the most up to date monitoring data and survey results. This is essential so that management action can be taken if required during the reporting cycle. Otherwise there is a danger of monitoring only to record the demise of species and habitats.

Obj 3: Management Group to identify gaps in the monitoring programme and any investigations or surveys required and develops means of filling these gaps.

Obj 4: SLLP / National Trust to engage volunteers and the wider public in citizen science and engagement work relevant to surveys and monitoring, first agreeing the best methodology and ensuring data use. This would enhance the existing programme but broaden its scope and frequency at least at a broad brush level. Scientific contracts and specialised personnel would continue to focus on the core monitoring programme, priority locations and provide a deeper level of data collection and analysis.

Obj 5: DAERA / NT to adjust the condition monitoring assessment for sandflats and mudflats to reflect the need to monitor invasion by *Spartina*

Goal 2: Undertake practical and legislative measures to maintain / restore / improve the Conservation Features

Identify a suite of actions to conserve, restore, maintain conservation features prioritising those currently in unfavourable condition and / or most at risk (see tables) . This will also take on board recommendations from the National Trust's Special Area of Conservation / SPA Action Plan.

The priority is to restore the following features which are now in unfavourable condition

- *M modiolus* Reel

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- Atlantic Salt Meadows
- Salicornia and other annuals
- Perennial Vegetation of Stony Banks
- Common Tern
- Golden Plover
- Knot

Obj 1: Restore *M modiolus* Reef

- Maintain existing measures and introduce new measures where possible through the *M modiolus* Restoration Programme - DAERA.

Obj 2: Restore Atlantic Salt Meadows and Salicornia and other annuals

Eradicate *Spartina*. – DAERA working through agreements with the National Trust and others

- Continue current programme
- Undertake a complete survey of *Spartina* across the whole MPA and produce a costed programme to eradicate it
- Secure the necessary resources
- Liaise with all relevant landowners and implement

Obj 3 Restore Perennial Vegetation of Stony Banks

- Review ASSI management arrangements and MOSS Scheme initiatives and refocus as required - DAERA
- Undertake conservation work across NT Property if required – NT
- Develop new initiatives with landowners to complement ASSI management and MOSS as part of AONB management – SLLP

Obj; 4 Restore Common Tern populations

- Undertake specific targeted research into the underlying causes in the first instance – DAERA through the National Trust.
- *Continue island habitat management – NT*
- *Identify potential new habitat for nesting as existing islands lose their soil caps or disappear altogether due to erosion and climate change DAERA / NT*

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- *Reduce disturbance from recreation users signage education, ongoing provision of islands for nesting NT / SLLP*
- *Continue existing National Trust monitoring of populations.*

Obj 5 Restore Knot populations:

It is thought that the decline in Knot is due to factors beyond the scope of this scheme and relate to short stopping along the flyway so the target here is to continue to monitor the Feature and contribute to the overall international understanding of population distribution and movement

Obj 6 Restore Golden Plover populations

- Undertake research into the potential causes of the decline relevant to Strangford Lough and also reviewing wider factors affecting the population

Goal 3: Reduce the risk to coastal features and overwintering bird features through Climate Change (sea level rise and change in sediments, wind direction, temperature etc)

There is a UK and Ireland wide call for shoreline management in view of increased storm events, expected rise of sea levels and coastal erosion. The National Trust's Shifting Shores initiative provides a focus regionally and locally. There are particular concerns with respect to coastal squeeze at the North end of the lough and on some islands and pladdies. A rise in sea level may reduce habitat and make the area less tenable for some species. Management measures will have to adapt to such changes.

Obj 1 Establish a Working Group to identify local issues and through an integrated approach seek to address them and also to compile them as evidence within Regional plans and to inform Local Development Plans and Community Plans (DAERA) . Take forward NT Shifting Shore Recommendations locally.

Obj 2 Commission research into species and habitat changes (including invasives) in the Lough due to climate change and monitor change as appropriate (DAERA).

Obj 3. Continue to record change along the coast using drones to deploy cameras (DAERA)

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Obj 4 Ensure Community Plans and Local Development Plans take into account the current and future threat of damage to houses and roads due to coastal erosion and to consider the effect of climate change when planning new development (Local Councils)

Obj 5 Ensure Planning decisions mitigate for climate change (Local councils with advice from Shared Environmental Services)

Goal 4. Reduce the risk to Features from key areas of human activity by introducing new, and improving existing, management measures

Obj 1: Develop research, surveys and monitoring to assess the effects of human interactions on the conservation features

Establish research and survey needs and priorities

Obj 2 Ensure Aquaculture Development is Environmentally Sustainable

Develop a strategy for aquaculture to avoid damage to the site.

Note: The future demand for aquaculture in the Lough is unclear, but the cumulative and long term impact of licencing is being considered as well as the individual applications. Overall capacity and effect on wild filter feeders and the cumulative effect of disturbance to overwintering birds and loss of habitat are amongst the issues under consideration. Climate change may also increase the demand for licences as temperature rises further south favour growing shellfish in this area. A rise in temperature also affects the growth of Pacific Oysters which have already spread across the Lough. DAERA currently stipulate that triploid stock, which is usually sterile, should be used to reduce the risk of future spread.

Obj 3 Manage shore based shellfish collection to reduce the risk of damage and disturbance to underboulder communities / intertidal reefs and overwintering birds

- *Introduce an effective system of regulation and control, of commercial shellfish collection, taking on board recommendations from the SLLP commissioned report Management of Shore-Based Periwinkle Collection on Strangford Lough & Lecale Coast, Clear Direction, 2013.*
- *Continue to report Gang activity so that they can be investigated under the Gangmasters Licensing Authority*
- *Raise public awareness of the issue*
- *Ensure required information on where the shellfish are harvested are filled in by processors.*

Obj 3: Ensure the Lough's pot fishery is environmentally sustainable into the future

- Implement a Strangford Lough Pot Fisheries Management Plan which takes into account catch techniques, prey species and landings and their relationship to the environment.
- Retain current restrictions under the *M modiolus* restoration programme but review and update as appropriate

Obj 4: Ensure outdoor recreation and tourism are managed and developed sustainably

- *Ensure risks posed by local council tourism and outdoor recreation proposals are managed and mitigated through the HRA process (Local Councils)*
- *Ensure that any response to the demand for better access to the shores and waters of Strangford Lough, including plans and proposals in the AONB Action Plan are compatible with the legal requirement to conserve the Selection Features (DAERA)*
- *Reduce risk of invasive species introduction and spread through improved communication and liaison with users and the introduction of related initiatives such as improved wash down facilities (SLLP)*
- *Conserve *M modiolus* communities by retaining existing By-laws but review and update controls as required (DAERA)*
- *Reduce OR related disturbance and damage by engaging OR users through the Local Outdoor Recreation Forum, SLLP Committee and directly with communities and clubs and develop related initiatives including on-line guidance and best practice. This will include taking forward recommendations from relevant reports and studies. (SLLP)*
- *Review and replace outdated / damaged Out and About signage (SLLP / NNT / Local Councils)*
- *Undertake related research and monitoring as required (DAERA / NT / SLLP)*

Goal 5 : Eradicate or control damaging invasive species

19 invasive species have been identified within Strangford Lough of which 5 are key: *Spartina*, *Didemnum vexillum*, Pacific Oyster , Japanese Wire Weed, Japanese Shrimp

Obj 1 Establish a Management Working Group to review data, determine causes and develop and deliver related initiatives, using a joined up approach between DAERA, local councils, Dept. of Infrastructure, and involving SLLP Committee members eg the Royal Yachting Association, Yacht Clubs and others.

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Obj 2 Eradicate Spartina

- *Complete a Spartina survey of all of the Lough and cost the requirements to spray the entire area*
- *Extend the Spartina eradication programme to cover all of NT sites and sites outside NT ownership.*

Obj 3 Continue to monitor, map and communicate location and extent of invasive species and continue regular biannual inspections at "hot spots".

Obj 5 Identify potential invasive species that may become a problem in future and / or the risk of invasion reduced by taking pre-emptive measures.

Obj 6 Engage the support of the wider public and volunteers in reducing the risk of introduction and spread invasives

- *Involve people in identifying, monitoring and taking preventative measures.*
- *Provide stakeholders with information on where these species are their spread and advice on their control*

Obj 7 Survey the spread of Pacific Oyster in the MPA

Goal 6: Improve water quality

Obj 1; Deliver River Basin Management Plan objectives.

Obj 2 Review pollution reduction programmes 2018.

Goal 7: Reduce coastal and marine litter

Obj 1: Develop collaboration across local councils, SLLP, NT, Keep NI Beautiful and other bodies on related education, lobbying, public engagement and clean-ups

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Goal 8: Engage local people and stakeholders and raise the profile of the area

Obj1: Continue the to develop a communication strategy through SLLLP to include the development of www.strangfordlough.org , social media and community activities as a focus for the Scheme, guidance and related projects and involving the National Trust through its properties and programmes.

Obj 2 Engage volunteers in monitoring, surveys and practical conservation . See also Obj: 8.3

Goal 9: Develop management capacity through funded projects

There are opportunities to develop projects which may have wider application than the Marine Protected Area Features but which could help to develop related MPA Management. Collaborative approaches have the potential to access funds for major pieces of work that could not be funded through DAERA or the local councils. LIFE , the HLF and its related Landscape Partnership Scheme, Trusts and others.

It is important that projects should be complementary and priorities addressed.

4.2 MANAGEMENT GROUP

Competent Authorities are any organisation or individual that has a statutory role in the UK – these organisations and authorities have a legal responsibility to help safeguard the features of the SAC/ SPA in undertaking their work and thereby achieve the aims of the Habitats Directive.

Relevant authorities are a sub-set of the competent authorities with specific responsibilities for Strangford Lough. These authorities work closely together and with stakeholders as a Management Group.

The Marine Site Management Group comprises:

1. The key relevant authorities are Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, NI Environment Agency, Ards and North Down Borough Council, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council and the Department for Infrastructure, Roads Service, Water Service but other authorities have a strategic and practical role to play and HM Coastguard.
2. The National Trust and the Crown Estate have a special status within the Management Group in view of their extensive landholdings within and adjacent to the MPA (intertidal, subtidal, foreshore, islands) .
3. The SLLP Stakeholder Committee (which includes the National Trust as a stakeholder and farming, fishing and outdoor recreation representatives amongst others). See also Section 3.5.

Each organisation will need to liaise internally to ensure the most appropriate representation and communication.

The Regulations do not affect the statutory powers of relevant authorities, but require that they apply them to ensure the protection of the site. The appropriate relevant authority should undertake any agreed management measure required to ensure that the conservation objectives are met.

It is envisaged that the Marine Site Management Group should meet once or twice per year to review and agree the overall work plan, involving all of its constituents, convened by the SLLP Office.

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The Management Group will comprise a number of Working Groups involving those authorities / stakeholders most relevant to the management of that work package or issue, eg *Modiolus* Restoration that will meet as required by the task in hand. Working Groups are established on a task and finish basis or as standing groups as required. They are facilitated as appropriate.

The MPA overlaps with the Strangford and Lecale AONB and it may be affected by plans and proposals for the AONB. The SLLP Office which produces the SLLP Action Plan on behalf of the local councils and stakeholders will ensure that any Action Plans are cross referenced.

The SLLP Office provides mechanisms for consultation and review of the Scheme and Action Plans and the development and delivery of collaborative initiatives, especially those where public / stakeholder engagement is required. In developing such initiatives it also provides a key mechanism for inward investment through grants and other funding sources. It also facilitates the Wardening Network and the Local Outdoor Recreation Group.

The SLLP Committee Membership – under review

Ards and North Down Borough Council Association of Strangford Lough Yacht Clubs Centre for Maritime Archaeology County Down Rural Community Network - Community County Down Rural Community Network - Regeneration Historic Monuments Council Joint Council of Wildfowlers Marine Task Force (to be replaced by Ulster Wildlife?) National Trust NI Fed of Sub-Aqua Clubs (tbc)	Newry Mourne and Down District Council Northern Ireland Agricultural Producers' Association Northern Ireland Environment Link Northern Ireland Fish Producers Organisations Queen's University Royal Yachting Association Sports Council for Northern Ireland Strangford Lough Fishermen's Association Strangford Lough Tourism Destination Management Forum Ulster Farmers' Union Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust
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The Ranger Network

Rangers and officers from the National Trust, local councils, DAERA, NIEA and volunteers who are involved in direct conservation and face to face public liaison work, meet once per year to update, exchange experience and improve collaboration.

The Local Outdoor Recreation Forum

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Facilitated by the SLLP / Sport NI and meets as required for the purpose of AONB and Marine Site OR development and management

Further work is needed to guide local councils and to agree and take initiatives forward.

DAERA NIEA Water Management Unit River Basin District Groups

Delivering Water Framework Directive objectives in partnership with other government agencies and stakeholders. Actions will be targeted through a series of catchment projects.

4.3 BOUNDARIES – MAPS

To be provided by DAERA

4.4 SURVEILLANCE AND ENFORCEMENT

DAERA Rangers

Two part time officers cover the County Down Coast. Their role includes gathering evidence and preparation of cases for infringements of the Wildlife (NI) Order 1985, co-ordinating marine mammal stranding responses, co-ordinating monitoring activities and collating information relevant to the management scheme. They work closely with Fisheries Officers, National Trust Rangers, SLLP staff and others.

DAERA Strangford Fishery Officer

DAERA fisheries Inspectorate have a Strangford Fishery Officer based at Ardglass fishery office. Responsibilities include:

- Prevention of unlawful fishing,
- Enforcement of the non-disturbance zone,
- Application of the Unlicensed fishing for Crabs and Lobsters Regulations (NI)
- Recording of fishing activity
- Application of Minimum Size Regulations
- Application of the Inshore Fishing Prohibition of Fishing and Fishing Methods Regulations (NI)2008

DAERA Fish Health Inspectorate (FHI) are responsible for monitoring and enforcement with regards to all the licensed aquaculture sites. The FHI inspect all the sites to ensure compliance with conditions in both the Fish Culture Licence and Aquaculture Production Business Authorisation. This includes checking aspects such as the position of equipment used and species cultivated, monitoring of all movements on/off site and providing relevant Health Certification or permits relating to any of these movements. We also carry out disease surveillance, and ensure the operator keeps all the appropriate records relating to compliance with the Aquatic Animal Health Regulations.

North Eastern River Basin District Catchment Officer

Involved in development and delivery of the North East River Basin Catchment Plans which covers Strangford Lough MPA and includes liaison with stakeholders.

Environmental Health Officers

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Shore based shellfish collectors are required to register with Environmental Health in their local council. Local council Environmental Health Officers issue Registration Documents which registered shore based shellfish harvestors are required to complete, including the location of each harvest and the quantity harvested.

National Trust Rangers and SLLP staff

NT Rangers and SLLP staff have no enforcement role but through working on site and liaising closely with local people and stakeholders they can provide a clearer picture of activities and events relevant to management of the site. They are often an informal conduit for reports from members of the public and volunteers who would not otherwise be heard – from wildlife sightings to concerns for wildlife disturbance. They liaise closely with DAERA Rangers.

REPORTING

Water pollution hotline: T: 0800 807 060 E: Emergency-Pollution@daera-ni.gov.uk

Illegal activities relevant to the Conservation Features / ASSI : CDP@daera-ni.gov.uk

Dead seals: NIEA Quoile Countryside Centre Tel: 028 44 615520

Ill or abandoned seal pups: Exploris , Portaferry: T: 028 427 28062 or 028 427 21196, E: info@explorisni.com or message on Facebook.

Wildlife crime (includes disturbance / damage to seals) PSNI T: 101 and describe your call as a Wildlife Crime report

Fish poaching in river-catchment areas other than Lough Foyle and Carlingford Lough, DAERA Inland Fisheries, T: 028 91 513101 or 0800 807060.

Damage to ASSI / Conservation Features: Marine Conservation and Reporting Team E: marinedivision.inforequests@doeni.gov.uk

Environmental Crime Unit in NIEA who liaise directly with Gangmasters' Licensing Authority : email: Assessment Unit.RED@daera-ni.gov.uk

Other useful contacts:

DAERA Marine and Fisheries Division: marine.inorequests@daera-ni.gov.uk

National Trust Strangford Lough :

Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership : 028 427 28886 info@strangfordlough.org

Water Quality Unit , DAERA

- information requests: email waterinfo@daera-ni.gov.uk
- domestic consents: email nieadomesticconsents@daera-ni.gov.uk
- industrial consents: email NIEA.DICAPAdmin@daera-ni.gov.uk
- sewage regulation: email wurg.admin@daera-ni.gov.uk
- water abstraction and impoundment: email ail@daera-ni.gov.uk
- water pollution and prevention: email emergency-pollution@daera-ni.gov.uk or Tel No 0800 807060

4.5 MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF PLAN EFFECTIVENESS

Monitoring of SACs takes place using two forms of monitoring.

1. **Site Integrity Monitoring (SIM) or Compliance Monitoring** is carried out at least once every year to ensure compliance with the ASSI/ SAC conservation objectives.

The most likely processes of change will either be picked up by SIM (e.g. dumping, burning, turf cutting, grazing etc.) or will be comparatively slow (e.g. gradual degradation of the habitat). In addition, potentially damaging activities may be picked up through the active marine ranger programme or by members of the public raising concerns with the Department. These reports are followed up through consultation with the relevant competent authorities.

2. **Site Condition Assessment** of the designated features is carried out on a rolling 6 year basis to pick up subtle changes in the condition of the feature and to ensure that the conservation objectives are being met. The method for Site Condition Assessment was agreed by the relevant JNCC-led Lead Co-ordination Network although the methodology has been modified to reflect individual site attributes in Northern Ireland. For marine features, condition assessments include a variety of techniques such as diving, remote cameras, sediment sampling and acoustic seabed mapping. Marine mammal monitoring programmes also contribute.

The Favourable Condition Tables supplement the conservation objectives and inform the scope and nature of any Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). Completion of a HRA is a separate activity to condition monitoring, requiring consideration of issues specific to individual plans or projects.

This Scheme and its related Action Plan will be reviewed annually by the Management Group. Further work is needed to develop SMART Objectives and Targets and a detailed Action Plan but this Scheme identifies goals and the main areas of work that have been identified.

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4.6 TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- April Draft plan prepared by SLLP and submission to DAERA
- May / June 2017 DAERA and Council Senior Management teams agree draft plan (may also include CNCC and Inter-Departmental Coordination Group at this stage).
- June – August 2017 Council elected Members / Minister agree draft plan
 - Launch of public consultation
- Public consultation (8 - 12 weeks?)
- Nov / Dec Management Group review consultation responses and amend the draft plan as necessary.
- Management Group agree the final draft to include the Action Plan.

5. EUROPEAN MARINE SITE CONSERVATION FEATURES STRANGFORD LOUGH SPECIAL AREA OF CONSERVATION (SAC)

Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide

The intertidal mudflats and sandflats in the north of Strangford Lough are the largest single continuous area of this habitat in Northern Ireland. The northern flats support luxuriant beds of eelgrasses (mainly *Zostera marina*) which are rare in the British Isles. The muds and muddy sands also support a number of invertebrates- worms and shellfish. The intertidal mudflats (particularly the *Zostera* beds) are also of great importance as feeding areas for the large numbers of wildfowl and waders that over-winter on the Lough.



Eelgrass

Coastal Lagoons

The Dorn is a silled lagoon on the eastern side of Strangford Lough near Ardkeen. The Dorn, from the Gaelic word for 'narrow channel', refers specifically to the channel which connects a series of very sheltered bays to the main Lough. Near the mouth, rock barriers or sills act as dams to hold back water as the tide falls, creating saltwater rapids which are almost unique in Ireland. In the area of the Dorn rapids, abundant growths of sea anemones, sponges and ascidians clothe the rock and boulders. Several of the animals found here normally occur in relatively deep water. The channel immediately above the sill has fast tidal streams without turbulence, enabling sponges to grow to exceptional proportions. The main trough of the Dorn supports a dense forest of seaweeds and the gravelly-sand bottom has unusually dense colonies of some worms and shellfish. The sheltered marine 'ponds' behind the Dorn sill feature beds of common eelgrass and green seaweeds.



The Dorn, north of Portaferry, is a coastal lagoon. The sill at its mouth creates a marine waterfall at certain states of the tide

Large shallow inlets and bays

Strangford Lough is an outstanding example of a large, enclosed fjardic sea lough. Fjards are found in areas of low-lying ground which have been subject to glacial scouring. They have a highly irregular outline, no main channel and lack the high relief and U-shaped cross-section of fjordic sea lochs. Sea water enters Strangford Lough through a narrow entrance, expanding into a broad, mostly shallow basin that has a central channel 30-60m deep, which carries rapid currents and causes great turbulence in some parts. With a wide range of tidal stream strengths and depths, there is a remarkable marine fauna within Strangford Lough and it is one of the most diverse sea loughs in the UK. The communities present range from the very rich high-energy communities near the Narrows and the mouth of the Lough which depend on rapid tidal streams, to communities in extreme shelter where fine muds support burrowing brittlestars, Dublin Bay prawn (*Nephrops norvegicus*), and a rich community associated with horse mussels (*Modiolus modiolus*).



The whole of Strangford Lough is classed as a large shallow inlet and bay. It is mainly under 10m deep though it reaches 60m in depth north of the Narrows.

Reefs

Reefs in Strangford Lough vary from tide-swept bedrock and large boulders in the main channel of the Narrows, through sand-scoured bedrock and boulders at either end of the channel, to more sheltered bedrock and boulders in the main central portion of the Lough and in parts of the intertidal.

Beds of horse mussels (*Modiolus modiolus*) used to form extensive biogenic reefs within the central portion of the Lough. In the Strangford Narrows, rock surfaces are entirely clothed in colourful soft coral, sponges (some reaching huge sizes), ascidians and sea anemones. Large boulders on the bed of the Narrows are subject to strong tidal streams. These boulders are clothed with encrusting sponges, hydroids, and sea anemones. Coarse sand scours rock surfaces at the sides and either end of the Narrows. Here, the characteristic species is the bryozoan *Flustra foliacea*. Glaciated or sea-worn bedrock outcrops are found at many locations. Massive boulders occur on the shore and form rocky islands known as 'pladdies'. The fauna and flora associated with these outcrops are dependent on the rock type, their position and the prevailing conditions.

Horse mussel beds form one of the richest communities in the Lough, with about 200 associated species growing and sheltering on the hard surface of live mussels and dead mussel shells. Full development of the community depends on the very sheltered, plankton-rich waters of extremely low turbidity found in the central to northern area. *M. modiolus* rarely occurs in such still waters. Many mobile suspension-feeders also occur, particularly the scallop *Chlamys varia*, and brittlestars in the central to south-western area where water movement is slightly greater.



Tide swept, large boulders featuring hydroids, sea anemones and soft corals

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SAC ANNEX I HABITATS PRESENT AS A QUALIFYING FEATURE, BUT NOT A PRIMARY REASON FOR SELECTION OF THIS SITE

Annual vegetation of drift lines (terrestrial feature but included in the MPA Scheme for the purpose of management)

This habitat type occurs on deposits of shingle lying at or above mean high-water spring tides. The most extensive drift line communities occur along the shores at the southern end of the Lough. The distinctive vegetation, which may form only sparse cover, is ephemeral and composed of annual or short-lived perennial species, such as sea sandwort, sea Mayweed, sea rocket, spear-leaved orache and sea beet.



Sea beet Beta vulgaris, also known as wild spinach, is the ancestor of common vegetables such as beetroot and Swiss chard

Perennial vegetation of stony banks (terrestrial feature included in the MPA Scheme for the purpose of management)

These shingle structures develop when a sequence of foreshore beaches is deposited at the limit of high tide, and more permanent ridges are formed when storm waves throw pebbles high up on the beach, from where the backwash cannot remove them. In Strangford Lough, this feature occurs at Gransha Point south of Kircubbin.

Associated vegetation includes curled dock, yellow horned-poppy, sea kale and sea pea. In more stable areas of shingle above this zone that are influenced by sea spray, the plant communities are dominated by salt tolerant species such as thrift and sea campion, often in a matrix with abundant lichens.



June is generally the best month to enjoy the lovely drifts of coastal flowers such as this sea campion, Selene maritima.

Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand

This pioneer saltmarsh vegetation colonises intertidal mud and sandflats in areas protected from strong wave action. It develops at the lower reaches of saltmarshes where the vegetation is frequently flooded by the tide, and also colonises open creek sides and depressions within saltmarshes.

In Strangford, this habitat is mostly confined to sheltered areas on the eastern side of the lough. This habitat typically comprises a small number of species. It is dominated by glasswort and seablite.



Like all saltmarsh plants glasswort or Salicornia sp. is adapted to inundation by the sea

Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae*)

Atlantic salt meadows develop when salt tolerant plants colonise soft intertidal muds and sands in areas that are protected from strong wave action. The vegetation varies with the frequency, the duration of tidal inundation and the amount of grazing by domestic livestock.

In Strangford, there is a relatively extensive area of saltmarsh around the mouth of the Enler River near Comber, and smaller areas of saltmarsh occur near Greyabbey and Newtownards, at Saltwater Bridge and at the innermost region of The Dorn. Small, isolated pockets of saltmarsh also occur along the shores at the southern end of the Lough.

Although they are small and scattered in occurrence, they are important because of the diversity of species and rarity of the habitat in Northern Ireland.



The most extensive Atlantic salt meadows are found around the mouth of the Enler river near Comber

SAC ANNEX II SPECIES PRESENT AS A QUALIFYING FEATURE, BUT NOT A PRIMARY REASON FOR SITE SELECTION**Harbour or Common seal *Phoca vitulina***

About 50% of the EU population of harbour (common) seals breed in the UK. They are smaller than the grey seal and are generally grey/brown in colour, made up of a mottle of dark spots on a lighter background. They are often seen on the shore in quite large groups.

Common seals return to the same haul-out site day after day and females give birth to a single pup between June and July. Seal pups can swim and dive from birth, and are good swimmers by the time they are weaned during late July. Strangford Lough is the most important breeding site for common seal in Ireland, and North Boretree Rock off Mount Stewart is one of the largest haul-outs in the Lough. Common seals can be seen anywhere in the Lough, but they are easiest to spot on rocky haul-outs close to the shore, such as Cloghy Rocks to the south of Strangford village, Castle Ward Bay, Granagh Bay south of Portaferry and near Ballyhenry Island just north of Portaferry.



Harbour seals are smaller than grey seals and have "v" shaped nostrils

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STRANGFORD LOUGH SPECIAL PROTECTION AREA (SPA)

The diversity of sheltered estuarine habitats in Strangford Lough means that it is the most important coastal site in Northern Ireland for wintering water birds, holding large numbers of geese, ducks and waders. It is world famous as the main arrival site for most of the Canadian population of pale-bellied Brent goose *Branta bernicla hrota*, which arrive in autumn to spend the winter in our warmer climate. Most of the geese disperse to other sites in Ireland, but substantial flocks can be seen all winter on the mudflats near Newtownards, feeding amid vast concentrations of wintering wildfowl. In summer, the lough supports three species of breeding terns. A number of SPA bird species roost or feed on areas outside the MPA boundary. These areas are important for the maintenance of these species, sites occurring outside the extent of natural or semi-natural habitat, together with agriculturally improved areas utilised by swans and geese, have not been included within the boundary of the SPA, but their importance must not be underestimated. Strangford Lough qualifies as an SPA under Articles 4.1 and 4.2 of the European Birds Directive.

ARTICLE 4.1: STRANGFORD LOUGH SUPPORTS POPULATIONS OF EUROPEAN IMPORTANCE OF THE FOLLOWING SPECIES LISTED ON ANNEX I OF THE DIRECTIVE



a. Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*,



b. Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

c. Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*,

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ARTICLE 4.2: STRANGFORD LOUGH SUPPORTS POPULATIONS OF EUROPEAN IMPORTANCE OF THE FOLLOWING MIGRATORY SPECIES

a. Knot *Calidris canutus*,



b. Light-bellied Brent Goose *Branta bernicla hrota*,



c. Redshank *Tringa totanus*,



a. Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*,

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ARTICLE 4.2: WATERBIRD ASSEMBLAGE. INCLUDES: BARTAILED GODWIT, COOT, CORMORANT, CURLEW, DUNLIN, GADWALL, GREAT CRESTED GREBE, GOLDEN PLOVER, GOLDENEYE, GREY PLOVER, GREYLAG GOOSE, KNOT, LAPWING, LIGHTBELLED BRENT GOOSE, LITTLE GREBE, MALLARD, OYSTERCATCHER, PINTAIL, RED-BREASTED MERGANSER, REDSHANK, RINGED PLOVER, SHELDUCK, SHOVELER, WIGEON, TEAL, AND TURNSTONE.



b. Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*,



c. Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*,

6. REFERENCES AND LINKS

MarESA assessment: <http://www.marlin.ac.uk/habitats/SNCB-benchmarksDETR>

OSPAR Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North East Atlantic Guidance on Developing an Ecologically Coherent Network of OSPAR Marine Protected areas. (Reference number 2006-3)

Marine protected area strategy <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/strategy-marine-protected-areas-northern-ireland-inshore-region>

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/strangford-lough-special-protection-area>

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/strangford-lough-special-area-conservation>

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/carlingford-lough-marine-conservation-zone>

Bathymetric & Habitat Map for Strangford Lough Special Area of conservation and Marine Conservation Zone, NI, AFBI

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/north-eastern-river-basin-district>

The impact of recreational sports and activities on over-wintering birds in the North End of Strangford Lough Summary Report, Allen and Mellon Environmental
Strangford Lough SAC / SPA Management Scheme, DAERA

Strangford Lough Marine Nature Reserve Guide to Designation, NI Environment Service

Report on the Management of Shore Based Periwinkle Collection on Strangford Lough and the Lecale coast, Clear Direction, 2013

Common Seal Research and Management, SLMC, July 1999

Strangford Lough and Lecale Heritage Management Strategy, 2013-18 , SLLP

Strangford and Lecale AONB Action plan (under review),

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Skerries and Causeway Marine SAC Management Plan, Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust (draft)

Rathlin Island, EU Marine Site Management Scheme, Consultation Report, DOE 2013

A guide to regulations applying to activities in Strangford Lough, SLMAC, 2009

Can the spread of non-native oysters (*Crassostrea gigas*) at the early stages of population expansion be managed? / Guy, C.I.; Roberts, David. In: Marine Pollution Bulletin, Vol. 60, No. 7, 2010, p. 1059-1064.

7. GLOSSARY

General Abbreviations

ct – compared with
 FHI – Fish Health Inspectorate
 FSA- Food Standards Agency
 ha – Hectare
 HMW- High Mean Water
 HRA – Habitat Risk Assessment
 km – Kilometre
 LBAP- Local Biodiversity Action Plan
 MarESA – Marine Evidence based Sensitivity Assessment
 NCALO- Nature Conservation & Amenity Lands Order
 NGOs- Non- Governmental Organisations
 NI- Northern Ireland
 R&D- Research & Development
 ROI- Republic of Ireland
 SA – Sustainable Appraisal
 SEA – Strategic Environmental Assessment
 SIM –Site Integrity Monitoring
 SOCC- Northern Ireland Species of Conservation Concern
 SUDS – Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems
 sp – species
 UK- United Kingdom
 WANE Act – The Wildlife & Natural Environment Act (NI)
 WiSe-Wildlife Safe Operator
 WWTW – Waste Water Treatment Works

Designations

AONB- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
 ASSI- Areas of Special Scientific Interest
 CFFC – Conservation Features in Favourable Condition
 EMS- European Marine Site
 ESA- Environmentally Sensitive Area
 MCZ- Marine Conservation Zone
 MPA – Marine Protected Area
 NNR – National Nature Reserves
 NIMF – Nationally Important Marine Features
 PMF – Priority Marine Features
 RAMSAR Site – Wetland Site of International importance
 SAC- Special Area of Conservation
 SPA- Special Protection Area

Agencies and other Bodies

AFBI- Agri-Food & Biosciences Institute
 ANDBC – Ards & North Down Borough Council
 BASC- British Association For Shooting & Conservation
 CAP- Common Agriculture Policy
 CNCC- Council Nature Conservation & the Countryside
 DAERA- Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
 DFC – Department for Communities
 DFI – Department for Infrastructure
 DETI-Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

DRD-Department for Regional Development
 EFF- European Fisheries Fund
 EU – European Union
 FLAG- Fisheries Local Action Group
 FOR- Forum Outdoor Recreation
 HLF – Heritage Lottery Fund
 JNCC-Joint Nature Conservation Committee
 MCA- Maritime & Coastguard Agency
 N2K- Natura 2000
 NIEA- Northern Ireland Environment Agency
 NITB- Northern Ireland Tourist Board
 NMDDC – Newry Mourne & Down District Council
 NT- National Trust
 OR- Outdoor Recreation
 OSPAR – name derives from Oslo and Paris meetings establishing international collaboration to protect and conserve the North East Atlantic & its Resources
 PPS – Planning Policy Statement
 QUB- Queens University Belfast
 RF- Recreation Forum
 SES – Shared Environmental Services
 SLLP- Strangford Lough & Lecale Partnership
 SLMAC- Strangford Lough Management Advisory Committee
 SLLPO- Strangford Lough & Lecale Partnership Office

8. APPENDICES

All Appendices are available for download from www.strangfordlough.org (to be confirmed)

1. Draft Marine Evidence Based Sensitivity Assessment (MarESA) Tables - attached
2. Strangford Lough SAC Conservation Objectives 2017
3. Strangford Lough SPA Conservation Objectives 2017
4. ASSI citations
5. Issues Papers from consultation workshops