



Comhairle Ceantair
**an Iúir, Mhúrn
agus an Dúin**
**Newry, Mourne
and Down**
District Council

Newry, Mourne and Down Local Biodiversity Action Plan

2017-2022

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Foreword

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Introduction

What is biodiversity?

Biodiversity is the short term used for 'biological diversity', which is 'the total variety of all living plants and animals, and the habitats in which they live'. The biodiversity we see today is the result of millions of years of evolution, shaped by natural processes and, increasingly, by the influence of humans. It is found all around us, in our gardens, parks, woodlands, fields, mountains, lakes and rivers. Biodiversity adds character and distinctiveness to an area. The Newry, Mourne and Down District is truly distinctive and varied from the Mountains of Mourne and Murlough, to the fens of Lecale and the Ring of Gullion. Indeed, this natural beauty has helped to shape our culture and inspire our artists, writers and composers.

Why is it important?

Biodiversity is a key measure of the health of our planet and therefore vital for our survival. It provides us with essential goods and services (ecosystem services) that we could not live without, such as the oxygen we breathe, water we drink, and food that we eat, as well as adding beauty and variety to our surroundings.



source: metrovancouver.org

Threats to Biodiversity

Many habitats and species across Northern Ireland are in decline. Some of these declines can be attributed to global causes while others have more local origins. Legislation and policy guidance is attempting to close the gap on these but of course, implementation, monitoring and enforcement are key.

Habitat loss and fragmentation

Habitat loss is the greatest threat to biodiversity worldwide either from damage, drainage, development, inappropriate management or fragmentation. For example over 90% of species rich grasslands or meadows were lost over a 50 year period in the UK as farming intensified post war and hay production changed to silage. This has resulted in the decline of many species dependant on meadows such as the Irish hare, specialised butterflies and moths and the complete loss of the corncrake.

Non-native invasive species, pests and diseases

Non-native invasive species are the second biggest threat to biodiversity after habitat loss. Human activities are the main cause of the introduction and spread of invasive species through accidental and deliberate releases, stowaways in imported goods or escapees from gardens and large estates. As invasive species tend to be highly adaptable and strong competitors, they can out-compete native species for food and space. Key invasive species already affecting our area include Japanese knotweed, Himalayan balsam, giant hogweed and grey squirrel, with potentially many more on the horizon.

Pollution

Pollution is the introduction of contaminants into the natural environment that cause adverse change. It can take the form of chemicals into water, litter, or sewage into our seas. Pollution still remains a serious problem for our environment and directly for biodiversity as it can kill species (fish kills in rivers and lakes, wildflowers and hedges sprayed with weed killer) and destroy habitat over time.

Climate change

Climate change will have significant impacts on both the distribution of species and habitats in our area and their ability to function as ecosystems. For example, species that exist only within certain ranges or temperatures could be pushed northwards and to higher altitudes, restricting their natural range and compromising their future. Healthy ecosystems will become more important to maintain and protect as we rely on efficient water regulating by bog lands and woodlands in our river catchments to reduce flooding.

Biodiversity: It's Our Duty

In 2011, the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern-Ireland) 2011 (WANE)¹ came into force, replacing the Wildlife Order (NI) 1985. This legislation is the primary tool for the conservation and protection of Northern Ireland's threatened or endangered wildlife. Whilst the WANE Act has introduced new species to protected lists, tightened controls on invasive species and increased penalties for wildlife crime, a significant change for Council was the introduction of a new Biodiversity Duty for all public bodies.

"It is the duty of every public body, in exercising any functions, to further the conservation of biodiversity so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions." Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern-Ireland) 2011

Why is the Duty required?

To halt the loss of biodiversity European, National and Regional targets have been set. The EU vision is for better protection of biodiversity by 2050. The target set by Northern Ireland, in the NI Biodiversity Strategy, is to significantly reduce overall biodiversity loss. The biodiversity duty is considered a key measure to contribute to these targets and at a Council level, adopting Biodiversity Implementation Plans (BIPs) that focus on internal Council actions and coordinating Local Biodiversity Action Plans, is agreed as an appropriate way to help meet this duty.

What's involved?

In essence, the aim of the duty is to raise the profile and visibility of biodiversity and to make it an integral part of policy and decision making. Public bodies when undertaking their functions, have to take into account the following five areas:

- The protection of biodiversity
- The maintenance of biodiversity
- Enhancing biodiversity
- Restoring biodiversity
- Promoting the understanding of biodiversity both within and outside the organisation

¹ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2011/15/contents>

Newry, Mourne and Down Council Local Biodiversity Action Plan

The publication of a Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) is the result of a number of international, national and local processes. It all began in 1992, which saw the gathering of world leaders from over 150 countries at the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit. This agreement led to the UK committing to produce an Action Plan to sustain and conserve biodiversity. In 1995, the UK Biodiversity Strategy was developed, followed by the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy in 2002. The NI Biodiversity Strategy has since been reviewed in 2015. Valuing Nature - A Biodiversity Strategy for Northern Ireland to 2020 sets out how Northern Ireland plans to meet its international obligations and identifies local targets to protect biodiversity, ensuring that the environment can continue to support our people and economy into the future.

To achieve the recommendations of these strategies, local biodiversity action must be taken. Local Biodiversity Action Plans do just that, developing local action for local wildlife. They also link in with and help deliver other plans within an area such as, Council Corporate Plans, Tourism Area Plans and AONB Management and Action Plans. The Local Biodiversity Action Plan, or LBAP process as it has become known, is a fantastic way to promote biodiversity throughout NI.

This new LBAP for Newry, Mourne and Down District Council area has been developed using the legacy Newry and Mourne and Down Council plans. Protecting the environment has remained high on the Council's agenda and this is reflected in our mission in the corporate plan 2015-2019, "Our mission as a council is to lead and serve a district that is prosperous, healthy and sustainable". This will be achieved through the Council's strategic objectives, which include protecting our natural and built environment.

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Area

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council is located in the south east of Northern Ireland, covering parts of County Down and Armagh. It is the third largest Council area within Northern Ireland comprising approximately 11% of the total land area and over 100 miles of coastline. The area is renowned for its scenic beauty, bounded on the east by Strangford Lough and Carlingford Lough and on the west by Slieve Gullion and Slieve Croob, with the picturesque Mountains of Mourne in the centre.



Of the eight Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) designated in Northern Ireland, three of them lie within our District; Mourne AONB, Ring of Gullion AONB and Strangford and Lecale AONB. The districts varied landscape combines to provide an important and unique biodiversity resource. A large number of sites in the district have been designated through legislation to protect key areas or habitats for nature conservation. The area has 62 Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI), 11 Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), 3 Special Protection Areas, (SPA), 4 Ramsar sites, 7 Nature Reserves and 187 Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCI). This reflects the importance of the area for biodiversity. Beyond these protected sites, in the wider countryside, land is managed for agriculture some of which will be

under agri-environment scheme agreements. These are designed to encourage the adoption of environmentally friendly management practices which can have great benefits for our biodiversity

The Newry, Mourne and Down Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) outlines a plan of action to:

- Conserve and enhance the rich biodiversity of the District for both current and future generations;
- Educate and raise awareness of the importance and variety of biodiversity found within the Newry, Mourne and Down District, and;
- Encourage local ownership of Newry, Mourne and Down District's biodiversity.

The project strives to ensure that the biodiversity of Newry, Mourne and Down is maintained and enhanced through the preparation and implementation of individual action plans, covering a range of habitats and species, which reflect European, national and local priorities. It is based largely on the targets set out in the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy, translating regional strategy into local action.

Everyone who lives in the District has an important part to play, and only with your support can we help protect our valuable flora and fauna!

Priority Habitats and Species in Newry, Mourne and Down

The following habitats and species have been selected for priority action on the merits of national and regional priority, conservation status, extent, rarity and importance to local people. Key species for action also include those that are iconic or will help to inspire people to take action. This list is not exhaustive and will be updated throughout the course of the LBAP.

Broad habitats selected for priority action in Newry, Mourne and Down:

- Coastal and Marine habitats
- Grassland
- Peatlands
- Urban habitats/gardens
- Wetlands
- Woodlands and Hedgerows

Species selected for priority action in Newry, Mourne and Down:

- Bats
- Breeding waders
- Bumblebees
- Fish Species
- House Sparrow
- Juniper
- Marine Mammals
- Marsh Fritillary
- Otter
- Red Kite
- Red Squirrel
- Yellowhammer

The many diverse habitats and species found in Newry, Mourne and Down will now be summarised. Each broad habitat category details the priority habitats in the District, where they occur locally, what key species they support and examples of the objectives and actions required to conserve them.

Habitats across Newry, Mourne and Down

Coastal

The coastline is a characteristic feature of the Newry, Mourne and Down district extending from Killyleagh to Newcastle, through Bloody bridge to Carlingford Lough. It supports an array of valuable coastal habitats as well as many important species. There are maritime cliffs and slopes, coastal vegetated shingle and coastal saltmarsh habitats present as well as extensive sand dune systems.

Key Threats	Local Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reclamation• Coastal squeeze• Inappropriate management• Erosion• Invasive species• Pollution• Unregulated shore based shellfish collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Raise awareness of coastal biodiversity through talks, events and press releases• Encourage the development of bye-laws to manage the coast for the benefit of people and wildlife• Encourage the monitoring of the coastal environment by local community groups

Maritime Cliff and Slopes

These include hard and soft cliffs, which extend from the splash zone (above the high water mark) at the base of the cliff to the land at the cliff top which is influenced by salt spray. Maritime cliffs are often significant for their populations of breeding seabirds, which can reach numbers of international importance. They provide nesting sites for breeding birds such as the guillemot, kittiwake, razorbill, raven and peregrine falcon. Examples include the cliffs of moraine at Killard Point (NR), which formed from debris deposited as the ice melted during the last Ice Age, and the cliffs at Maggie's Leap, Newcastle, which support a large population of kittiwakes.

Coastal Vegetated Shingle

Coastal vegetated shingle is defined as sediment with particle sizes larger in diameter than sand (>2mm) but smaller than boulders (<200mm). Vegetated shingle banks occur at the upper end of the shore where conditions are favourable, usually in high energy environments. They occupy long strips but typically have a small surface area and support specialised plant and invertebrate communities.

In Northern Ireland coastal vegetated shingle is found mainly along the low, rocky parts of the County Down coastline. Extensive areas include Gransha Point, Strangford Lough, Minerstown and Glassdrumman. Rare plants such as

sea kale, oysterplant and yellow horned poppy are found in these areas. Coastal vegetated shingle also supports breeding birds such as ringed plover and oystercatcher.

Coastal Saltmarsh

Saltmarshes are a highly productive habitat dominated by species that are tolerant of flooding by seawater. They occur mostly in the upper vegetated areas of mudflats, in sheltered areas of low wave energy. Saltmarsh is a very important habitat as the vegetation consists of a limited number of salt tolerant species adapted to regular covering by the tide. As well as this it is also very important for wading birds and wildfowl such as oystercatcher, redshank, lapwing, golden plover and curlew.

Saltmarsh is now a rare habitat in Northern Ireland as the majority of the original habitat has been reclaimed and improved for agriculture. Strangford Lough and Mill Bay in Carlingford Lough (ASSI) support the most extensive areas of saltmarsh in Northern Ireland. The Sheepland Coast (ASSI) also has saltmarsh areas in sheltered bays and inlets along the coast.

Coastal Sand Dunes

Sand dunes develop when wind-blown sand is trapped by specialised dune building grasses, such as marram (*Ammophila arenaria*), above the high water mark. Sand dunes are diverse habitats that support a range of common and rare plants, mosses, insects, birds and mammals. They support a large proportion of our butterfly, moth, ant, bee and wasp species. Sand dunes also provide nesting habitat for breeding birds such as the skylark and meadow pipit.

Two of the largest sand dune systems in Northern Ireland are found within the Newry, Mourne and Down District: Dundrum Bay and Killard (NNR). The Dundrum Bay dunes include Murlough National Nature Reserve (NNR), which is a fragile 6,000 year old dune system, owned and managed by the National Trust. Murlough NNR supports the largest population of the marsh fritillary butterfly in Northern Ireland. Also, keep your eyes peeled for the secretive common lizard. Dundrum Bay dunes support rare plants such as Shepherd's cress, one of only three sites that this species has been seen in the past 30 years. Tyrella Beach (ASSI) is a small enclosed dune complex within Dundrum Bay. The 2km long flat, sandy beach is backed by 25 hectares of mature dunes in a conservation area. Killard Point (ASSI) sand dune system remains largely unmodified and is of vital importance for a number of rare plants and animals. It is one of the best sites in Northern Ireland for grassland and heath invertebrates.

Key Coastal Species

Yellow-horned Poppy

The yellow-horned poppy is a rare plant found on bare shingle along the County Down coast. Each individual plant produces one to several rosettes with a single flower stalk emerging from each. The waxy leaves are greyish-green and covered with fine short hairs which protect the leaf surface from the salty conditions in which it lives.

Light-bellied Brent Goose

The light-bellied Brent goose is a small, dark goose with a pale belly. Strangford Lough and Carlingford Lough are the most important sites for the species in the UK and Ireland, where they can be seen from September to April. These geese have one of the longest migrations, travelling from their wintering grounds in Ireland via Iceland and Greenland to their summer breeding grounds in arctic Canada. Killough Bay (ASSI) is the last staging post in Ireland before their lengthy return to Canada. Their main food plants are eel grass (*Zostera* species), green algae and saltmarsh grasses.

Curlew

The curlew is a large wading bird, well known for its very long, decurved bill. Its haunting two-note call and bubbling song was once a familiar sound of the open countryside. However, it has declined as a breeding species in Northern Ireland and elsewhere in northern Europe over the last twenty years. Outside the breeding season, birds arrive from the north and east to winter mainly around the coast. Strangford Lough is one of the most important wintering sites in Northern Ireland for the curlew.

Grassland

Grassland is a major habitat type in the Newry, Mourne and Down district, which includes lowland meadows, calcareous grassland and purple moor grass and rush pastures. These grasslands differ depending on the soil type and vegetation cover. Agriculture is a major industry within the area and, if managed appropriately, farmland can provide food and shelter for many native plants and animals.

Agriculture is one of the main industries in the district. Some changes in agricultural practices in recent times have resulted in reduced wildlife value in many farming areas. However, agri-environment schemes developed by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) have encouraged farmers and landowners to adopt environmentally friendly management practices which benefit biodiversity.

Key Threats	Local Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Scrub encroachment• Inappropriate management/grazing• Changes in agricultural practice• Abandonment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Raise awareness of the importance and value of grasslands for biodiversity through events, talks and press releases• Liaise with Transport NI and other governmental organisations to enhance the biodiversity value of roadside verges through appropriate management• Pilot wildflower meadows on publically accessible land to improve areas for pollinators and act as best practice examples

Arable Field Margins

Arable field margins are strips of land between cereal crops and the boundary of the field. They are deliberately managed under agri-environment agreements to benefit farmland wildlife. Arable field margins provide nesting and feeding sites for many birds such as skylark and linnets, not to mention the huge variety of insects including butterflies, grasshoppers and plant bugs. Many species of priority wildflowers can be found in these margins.

Lowland Meadows

A lowland meadow is defined as unimproved neutral grassland found on enclosed land, normally on a well-drained mineral soil with a sward rich in wildflowers. Such meadows are found in former hay meadows or in non-agricultural sites such as churchyards or roadside verges. In Newry, Mourne

and Down several examples of lowland pastures can be found in the Crossmaglen drumlins and Newcastle valleys. Traditional management practices in Tullyard ASSI for example, have brought about a great diversity in species composition, both of grasses and herbs. Levallymore ASSI and Tullyratty ASSI are also excellent examples of species rich meadows.

Calcareous Grassland

Calcareous grasslands are species-rich grasslands occurring on shallow, lime-rich soils most often derived from chalk and limestone rocks. This habitat is mainly associated with Fermanagh where it occurs on limestone; however this excludes the habitat when it occurs on other substrates. In the Newry, Mourne and Down district small pockets of calcareous grassland are scattered across the Mourne mountains, with species such as wild thyme and wet acid grasslands dominated by purple moor-grass, rushes and sedges providing additional habitat diversity.

Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh

This is pasture that is periodically inundated by water or meadows with ditches containing standing brackish or fresh water. Coastal grazing marshes occur in flat coastal areas typically behind coastal defences or natural barriers (e.g. sand dunes) and are drained by ditches of standing water. Floodplain grazing marsh is found near slow-flowing rivers and lakes, where they can also be drained by a network of ditches. In the Newry, Mourne and Down District this habitat is found at Strand Lough (ASSI) and the Quoile Pondage (NNR). These habitats usually support a high proportion of herbs such as marsh thistle, meadowsweet, water mint and marsh bedstraw and wading birds including curlew, redshank and lapwing.

Lowland Dry Acid Grassland

Lowland dry acid grassland occurs in nutrient-poor, well-drained acid soils. There are no large areas of lowland dry acid grassland in Northern Ireland. Instead, it is most likely to be found in very small patches in a matrix of other grassland types. This habitat may also occur in old gardens, churchyards and other amenity areas. In Newry, Mourne and Down it can be found on the lowland slopes of the Mournes and in south Armagh. Lowland dry acid grassland contains plant species such as common bent, sheep's sorrel and tormentil and supports species such as the Irish hare and skylark.

Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pasture

This habitat occurs on poorly drained, acidic soils in lowland areas often as fragments within farmland in wet hollows or field corners. Purple moor grass is always present in the mix, with many other species of grasses, sedges, rushes and wildflowers such as orchids, wild angelica, meadow thistle, devil's bit scabious and self-heal. This habitat, in association with others, provides ideal sites for a number of Northern Ireland's Priority bird species such as the skylark, curlew, reed bunting and snipe. The Irish lady's tresses orchid and marsh fritillary butterfly may also be found in this habitat. In the Newry,

Mourne and Down District this habitat occurs within the Quoile Valley Lowlands, Killough Bay and Strand Lough (ASSI).

Key Species

Yellowhammer

The yellowhammer is a member of the bunting family and a characteristic resident species of lowland arable and mixed farmland. In the summer they can be found in highly productive areas of farmland whereas in winter they form flocks and feed in mixed farmland on stubble fields. The yellowhammer was once a familiar farmland bird but its numbers have declined in recent years.

Skylark

The skylark is a small brown farmland bird which is renowned for its display flight. It flies vertically up in the air and then hovers whilst in song. The skylark likes open countryside, from lowland farmland to upland heath. It can be found in the uplands in Newry and Mourne, however its numbers have been declining recently.

Pink Meadow Waxcap

The pink waxcap is a fungus with a pinkish-lilac conical cap and a slightly greasy appearance. Fungi acquire nutrients from living or dead plants, animals or other fungi. This species is found all over NI in mossy lawns and semi-natural grasslands. Silent Valley in the Mourne is a good site for waxcaps.

Marine

The marine environment supports over half of the UK's biodiversity. A number of very important marine habitats occur within the Newry, Mourne and Down District. Strangford Lough was designated as Northern Ireland's first Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) in 2013, with Carlingford Lough being designated as a MCZ in 2016. These zones safeguard vulnerable or unique marine species and habitats of national importance in the Northern Ireland inshore region based on an ecosystem approach. Marine Conservation Zones fulfill the obligations of The Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013 (the "Act") to contribute to an ecologically coherent UK network of Marine Protected Areas as well as wider biodiversity commitments at a European and global level.

Key Threats	Local Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical disturbance e.g. dredging/trawling • Over exploitation of marine resources • Water pollution • Marine litter • Invasive species 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with the Council's tourism and education programmes to promote the biodiversity, tourism and educational importance of the marine environment through talks and events • Work in partnership with local environmental organisations to hold 'shore clean-ups' • Promote recording of key marine species such as cetaceans • Promote marine recording schemes such as Coastwatch and Shore-thing

Horse Mussel Beds

The horse mussel, *Modiolus modiolus*, is a long-lived, slow reproducing marine mollusc that can occur in isolated clumps or together in large beds. These beds form a vital habitat for the attachment of many marine animals (approximately 272 species) that would not otherwise be found in the area. These include brittlestars, the rugose squat lobster and the commercially important queen scallop. Some of the mussels within beds can be 25 years old or more. The beds occur in 4 areas in Northern Ireland, the largest of which is found in Strangford Lough. Due to deterioration of the Strangford Lough beds a permanent ban was placed on mobile fishing gear. The restoration plan recommends 'total protection' in areas of the lough where fishing activities prevent the recovery of the beds.

Maerl Beds

Maerl is the term used to describe several species of calcified marine algae. Although it is slow growing, over long periods its dead calcareous skeleton can accumulate into deep deposits. With an additional thin layer of living maerl, beds are formed. Maerl beds are typically found in sheltered conditions with some tidal flow, including the narrows and rapids of sea loughs. These habitats can support communities of sea pens and sea cucumbers. Maerl beds are found in Strangford Lough at Zara Shoal off Castleward Bay, Jane's Rock in the centre of the Lough and Rainey Island near Whiterock.

Mudflats

Mudflats are intertidal habitats created by sedimentary deposition in low energy coastal environments, particularly in estuaries and other sheltered areas such as sea loughs. They are highly productive areas, which, together with other intertidal habitats, are of great importance to large numbers of birds and fish providing vital feeding and resting areas for internationally important populations of migratory, over wintering and breeding waterfowl. Mudflats can be found at the western end of Carlingford Lough and throughout Strangford Lough. Intertidal mudflats are also found within Inner Dundrum Bay and Killough Bay (ASSI).

Mud Habitats In Deep Water

Mud habitats in deep water typically occur below 20-30m in many areas of the UK's marine environment. As a fairly stable habitat, communities of burrowing animals often become established, such as the Dublin bay prawn and seapens. Several Northern Ireland Priority Species use these habitats, including the rugose squat lobster. Beds of Dublin bay prawns have been recorded off Newcastle and are found in the centre of Strangford Lough on extensive areas of mud plains. Mud habitats in deep water can also be found in Carlingford Lough.

***Sabellaria alveolata* reefs**

Sabellaria alveolata reefs consist of tightly packed honeycomb - like masses of tubes constructed by a small worm called the polychaete. The reefs can be up to 50cm thick, forming sheets, hummocks or massive formations. Compared to young formations, older reefs seem to support a higher level of biodiversity due to their increased amount of crevices. Recent surveys have located these reefs at three sites within the district: Glasdrumman where there is a high quality reef, Minerstown and Coney Island.

Saline Lagoons

Saline lagoons are water bodies with a restricted connection to the sea due to natural or artificial barriers. As a result, the salinity of the water is neither marine nor fresh but may vary from brackish to fully saline. Organisms found in saline lagoons range from marine and freshwater species to lagoon specialists. Saline lagoons are also important habitats for large numbers of wildfowl and waders. In the Newry, Mourne and Down District, saline lagoons are found at Killough Bay and Strand Lough (ASSI). Strand Lough is a

brackish lake but many of the surrounding fields contain plants characteristic of saline conditions. It is the last remaining site in Ireland that supports the Northern Ireland Priority Species, the crawling water beetle, *Haliphus apicalis*.

Seagrass Beds

Seagrasses are marine flowering plants which often grow in dense, extensive beds in shallow, coastal areas on sheltered sandy or muddy substrata. This creates a highly productive habitat that provides food and shelter for other plant and animal species. Seagrass beds also provide nursery and foraging areas for commercially important fish, improve water quality by removing dissolved nutrients, stabilise sediments and are a valuable food resource for wildfowl such as the light-bellied Brent goose. Seagrass beds can be found in Strangford Lough, Carlingford Lough, Dundrum Bay and Killough Harbour.

Key Marine Species

Harbour porpoise

The Harbour porpoise is the smallest and most common cetacean (whale/dolphin) found in the coastal waters of Northern Ireland. It is dark grey with a pale belly and white extending up the sides. It has no forehead or distinct beak and can often be detected by the sound of its short, sharp blows. The population is believed to have decreased over the last 50 years – which may be due in part to thousands of porpoises getting caught and drowning in commercial fishing nets every year around the UK coast. The best places to see Harbour porpoises are headlands and bays when the sea is calm.

Seapen

The slender seapen, *Virgularia mirabilis*, is a marine invertebrate in the same group as corals and anemones. True to its name, the sea pen looks like an old fashioned quill that can retract into the mud when disturbed. In the Down District communities of this seapen can be found in sandy and muddy habitats in Strangford Lough, Dundrum Bay and part of the Quoile River.

Common Seal

The common seal is the smaller of the two seals found along the County Down coastline. It can be recognised by its short muzzle and V-shaped nostrils, compared to the longer, doglike muzzle of the grey seal. The common seal can be seen hauled out on rocky shores and sandbanks from July to September. Strangford Lough holds a significant population of these marine mammals in Northern Ireland.

Peatlands

Peatlands are a characteristic part of the Irish landscape due to the Islands cold, wet climate. NI contains a significant proportion of the remaining bog resource in Europe and therefore the importance of these bogs cannot be over-emphasised.

Key Threats	Local Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Habitat loss and fragmentation• Drainage• Inappropriate grazing• Extensive peat extraction• Scrub encroachment• Non-native invasive species such as rhododendron• Trampling and disturbance• Inappropriate development e.g. wind farms	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Raise awareness of the importance of bogs and heath for biodiversity through events, talks and press releases• Develop initiatives at suitable sites to help enhance their value for wildlife• Promote the use of peat free compost within Council and at wildlife gardening events/talks for the public

Lowland Raised Bog

Lowland raised bogs are peatland ecosystems that are found in lowland areas generally below 150m. In NI, they are typically found in wide river valleys or between glacial hilly drumlins. Due to their harsh conditions, only a limited number of specialised plants can live in these habitats, including cotton grasses, cross-leaved heath and bog asphodel. The main building block of peat is Sphagnum mosses. These mosses hold water like a sponge contributing to the waterlogged, acidic conditions. In Newry, Mourne and Down small patches of lowland raised bog have been found in the Strangford drumlins and islands and the Mourne Mountains. Unfortunately many have been cut-over in the past and some have subsequently been reclaimed into grassland while others developed into diverse sites with fen, carr woodland, and remnant patches of bog.

Blanket Bog

Blanket bog generally occurs in upland areas and is a layer of peat and associated vegetation covering the land like a 'blanket'. Similar to lowland raised bogs, sphagnum mosses are the main component of a blanket bog. Other dominant plant species include heather and cross-leaved heather, cottongrass, deergrass and sundews. Within the Newry, Mourne and Down district, blanket bog is found mainly on the higher slopes of the Carrigatuke Hills, Slieve Roosley and the Mourne Mountains. Kilbroney red bog above Rostrevor is one example occurring in the Mournes mountains. However very little of the blanket bog in the Mournes and Carrigatuke remains intact, most

has eroded and is thin and other areas of deeper peat have been cut-over or indeed cut-away.

Lowland Heathland

Lowland heath occurs on mineral soils and thin peat generally below 300m and supports a range of flora and fauna not found on upland heath. It is characterised by the presence of dwarf shrubs such as heather and bell heather. The majority of the NI resource can be found in the Newry, Mourne and Down District on the lower slopes of the Mourne mountains and the Ring of Gullion. Lowland heath in the Mourne is important for a number of UK and NI priority species for example the keeled skimmer dragonfly and green hairstreak and marsh fritillary butterflies.

Upland Heathland

Upland heathland occurs on acidic soil and thin peat in upland areas on the higher slopes, generally above heights of around 300m. Upland heath often forms part of a mosaic with other habitats such as acid grassland, fen and bog, which enhances its value for wildlife. The Mourne support some of the most extensive and important tracts of upland heath in NI, which are also of European importance. The upland heathland on Slieve Gullion ASSI is one of the largest expanses in NI of this rare habitat. It is dominated by heather and where there is no intervening forestry, there is a transition downslope to lowland heaths and acid grassland and fens. Cowberry can also be found here. Other important species found in upland heath in the district include the Irish hare, peregrine falcon, and juniper.

Montane Heath

Montane heath is found in areas that lie above the natural level of tree development, generally above 600m. Northern Ireland is towards the southern edge of the natural range for this habitat. It consists of a range of short dwarf shrubs such as heather, grasses, sedges and specialised mosses and lichens. Montane heath occurs on several summits in the Mourne Mountains, most notably Slieve Binnian. Species present are similar to those found in upland heathland and blanket bog, for example meadow pipit.

Key Peatland Species

Irish Hare

The Irish hare is a unique hare species only found in Ireland. It has a russet brown coat, long ears with black tips and eyes set high in the head. The species occurs in Newry, Mourne and Down in upland sites but also on lowland sites such as bogs, farmland and coastal grassland.

Green Hairstreak Butterfly

The Green hairstreak is an unmistakable small green butterfly that is found in bogs and heaths with plenty of scrub. The green hairstreak always rests with its wings closed showing its striking metallic green undersides that have a faint line of white spots. This is a clever form of camouflage as it resembles a

newly opened leaf. Food plants include bird's-foot-trefoil, gorse, bilberry, cross leaved heath and bramble. Green hairstreak has been recorded at various sites across the district including Tollymore Forest Park and Silent Valley.

Juniper

Juniper is one of only three conifers native to Ireland. It is a slow growing prickly shrub which can be found growing either low to the ground or upright. It is mainly found in montane habitats and around limestone pavement or calcareous rocky outcrops and cliffs. Juniper was one of the first plants to recolonise the landscape of Northern Ireland post-glaciation. It is thought to have declined by up to 60% throughout Britain since the 1960's, possibly due to increased agriculture and overgrazing by cattle, sheep and goats. Juniper found in the Mourne is genetically unique.

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Urban Habitats and Gardens

Often overlooked, urban habitats and gardens are very important for a wide range of species. These urban greenspaces have special importance for biodiversity as they are where wildlife and people can interact. Habitats include gardens, urban parks, walks, golf courses, cemeteries, industrial sites and brownfield or abandoned sites.

Key Threats	Local Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Urban development• Non-native invasive species• Unsympathetic management including excessive chemical use and grass cutting• Landfill and dumping	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Raise awareness of wildlife friendly gardening through public events and the media• Collaborate with the Council's Parks department to improve the biodiversity value and interpretation of local parks• Create and manage a network of Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) in Council owned sites

Urban Greenspace

Small pockets of green space in urban settings can provide ideal habitats for a wide range of plants and animals. Sites such as golf courses, cemeteries, roundabouts and small parks provide safe havens for wildlife in busy towns and cities. In the Newry, Mourne and Down District there are many examples of small parks and green spaces which are of benefit to people and wildlife alike.

Parks are generally larger and more mature than gardens, therefore tend to have a more diverse range of wildlife associated with them. Parks are typically managed for formal and informal recreation but many could be developed to enhance their biodiversity value. Good examples of public parks in the district include Castlewellan Forest Park, Tollymore Forest Park, Kilbroney Park and Slieve Gullion forest park.

Gardens

Gardens link urban greenspace with the wider countryside, forming a mosaic of wildlife habitats. Every garden, big or small, has the potential to be a mini nature reserve. Many gardens already support some level of biodiversity, but with a little more planning for wildlife in mind, we could be making a much more valuable contribution to protecting our native plant and animal species.

Industrial and Business Sites

Many industrial sites have areas within their premises that are of benefit to wildlife. Neglected corners provide a refuge for a range of plants and animals.

Old derelict buildings can provide shelter for bats and nesting places for birds such as the starling, swallow and house martin. New industrial sites can also be valuable for wildlife if landscaped using native flowers, shrubs and trees.

Key Species

House Sparrow

The house sparrow lives happily alongside humans nesting under roof tiles and sometimes in existing swallows nests. It has suffered decline recently due to a lack of insect food in the summer and winter seed and is consequently a NI priority species.

Bumblebee

There are six common bumblebee species that can be found in gardens, including the white-tailed and red-tailed bumblebees. During the summer bumblebees are 'busy', collecting nectar and in turn, pollinating native plants and agricultural crops. Sadly, bumblebees are declining as there is not enough natural habitat left for them to live. Although species-rich grassland is the preferred habitat for most bees, urban gardens are providing an important haven for this declining group.

Hedgehog

The western European hedgehog was selected as a UK priority species in 2007 due to a decline in numbers. They are common in parks, gardens and farmland throughout mainland Britain and Ireland, and prefer woodland edges, hedgerows and suburban habitats where there is plenty of food such as beetles, worms, caterpillars and slugs.

Wetland Habitats

Wetlands are extremely important habitats as they support a variety of plants and animals such as invertebrates, fish, amphibians, mammals and birds. Newry, Mourne and Down District has many good quality examples of wetland habitat including lakes, rivers and streams, reedbeds and fens.

Key Threats	Local Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nutrient enrichment of water through pollution, such as agricultural run-off• Changes in water levels through drainage and inappropriate management• Non-native invasive species e.g. Japanese knotweed, Giant hogweed and Himalayan balsam	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Raise awareness of the importance of wetlands for biodiversity through specific guided walks, talks and press releases• Develop initiatives at suitable wetland sites to help enhance their value for wildlife• Promote and increase the recording of key wetland species

Lakes and Ponds

Standing open water, including lakes and ponds, are quite an extensive habitat across Newry, Mourne and Down and Northern Ireland as a whole. Lakes can be classified by the levels of nutrients that occur naturally in the water. Eutrophic waters have high nutrient levels and, in their natural state, associated high levels of biodiversity. Examples in the District include Great Dam, Mill Pond and Derryleckagh Lough. Mesotrophic lakes have moderate nutrient levels and in the District include Altnadua Lough, Aughnadarragh Lough (ASSI) and Camlough Lough. Marl lakes have high alkalinity and low nutrient levels (oligotrophic). The Lecale region includes an area of marl lakes and fen peat pools of high biodiversity importance at Loughkeelan, east of Downpatrick. The Loughkeelan (ASSI) supports large numbers of rare stoneworts and the UK Priority Species, Marsh Stitchwort, occurs in adjacent fen areas.

Ponds are found within interdrumlin areas across East Down, ranging from large pools surrounded by fringes of fen or woodland to small ponds with more extensive fens. Lakes and ponds support invertebrates such as dragonflies, beetles, mayflies and pondskaters. They also support many species of breeding and wintering waterfowl and plants such as the yellow water-lily and duckweeds.

Rivers and Streams

Rivers and streams are of great value to wildlife and because of this are recognised as an important habitat locally. No two rivers are alike and neither are their assemblages of plants and animals. They support many priority and important species such as Atlantic Salmon, Brown Trout, Otter and bat

species. Newry river flows through Newry city acting as a border between counties Down and Armagh, eventually emptying into Carlingford Lough. This provides a valuable wildlife corridor for species movement along with the canal and other rivers present in the District. Another important river is the Shimna River (ASSI) in Tollymore Forest Park. It is in a highly natural state and provides an excellent habitat for populations of Atlantic salmon, brown trout and sea trout.

Fens

A fen is a wetland with a permanently high water level at or just below the surface. They often form on peaty soils in river valleys or hollows and receive the majority of their water and nutrients from soil, rock and ground water. Fens support a rich variety of sedges, grasses and mosses, as well as invertebrates such as the Irish Damselfly and the whirligig beetle. Breeding waders also depend on fen wetlands habitats. In Newry, Mourne and Down District, rich fen occurs at the Fens of Lecale (SAC), Ballybannan (ASSI), Ballycam (ASSI) and Carrowcarlin (ASSI). The latter site supports invertebrates including rare water beetles, spiders and pond skaters.

Reedbeds

The term reedbed describes a wetland habitat dominated by common reed in areas where the water table is at or above ground level for most of the year. This habitat is widely distributed on the margins of water bodies, along lowland and upland streams, estuaries, reservoirs, clay pits, sewage treatment works, industrial lagoons and as successional habitat on fens and bogs. In Newry, Mourne and Down reedbeds can be found in Killough Bay and Strand Lough (ASSI), Turmennan (SAC, ASSI) and Ballykilbeg (SAC, ASSI). Ballykilbeg supports a number of scarce plants and a well-established colony of the marsh fritillary butterfly. Reedbeds also provide excellent cover for birds such as the reed bunting.

Key Wetland Species

Otter

Otters live on the banks of rivers, lakes and the coast feeding on fish, shellfish, smaller mammals and birds. They have a long streamlined body and tail and can be found sleeping in holes in the riverbank called holts. They are quite widespread in the Newry, Mourne and Down District, especially along Newry canal and the Quoile river (ASSI).

Irish Damselfly

The Irish damselfly is a delicate blue damselfly found in Ireland around small lakes and is concentrated in Armagh, Down, Fermanagh and Tyrone. Within Newry, Mourne and Down, it has been recorded at Drumlougher Lough outside Crossmaglen and Black Lough (ASSI). The Irish damselfly is a NI priority species and only occurs in areas where there is good water quality, as it is very sensitive to pollution.

Atlantic Salmon

The Atlantic salmon is known as the 'king of fish' due to its vast migrations across the North Atlantic. In autumn, adults make their way upstream to spawn in riverbeds, often leaping over obstacles such as waterfalls to do so. One year after moving to the sea, young salmon use their homing instinct to return to the river of their birth to spawn themselves. Major threats include over fishing, introduction of non-native salmon stocks, physical barriers to migration and increased mortality at sea. These fish can be found in rivers in the Mourne Mountains. The Footstick Bridge in Tollymore Forest Park is a 'hot spot' for leaping salmon.

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Woodland

There was a time when Northern Ireland was almost completely covered in woodland. However, as a result of agriculture and development, it is now the least wooded region in Europe, with only 6% woodland cover, 1% of which is native broad-leaved woodland.

Key Threats	Local Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Habitat loss and/or fragmentation• Inappropriate management• Tree diseases such as Ash dieback• Non-native invasive species e.g. grey squirrel, Japanese knotweed and Rhododendron	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Raise awareness of the importance of woodlands and hedges through guided walks, talks and press releases• Increase the woodland cover of our district through promotion of funded schemes e.g. agri-environment schemes and the Woodland Trust schemes for restoration, restocking or creation• Pilot new woodland planting schemes on publically accessible land• Promote and increase the recording of key woodland species

Mixed Ashwoods

Mixed ashwoods are woodlands where ash is the dominant species in association with other broadleaf native species such as oak, downy birch and hazel. Other trees such as rowan and the non-native species sycamore and beech may also be common. Mixed ashwoods support a rich and colourful ground flora of spring-flowering herbs such as wood-anemone, bluebells, primrose and wild garlic.

In Newry, Mourne and Down district, mixed ashwoods are found on Fathom mountain and in the Newcastle valleys. Small unidentified pockets of mixed ashwoods can also be found across the district that may have importance locally for wildlife.

Oakwoods

Oakwoods are dominated by the two native oak species in Northern Ireland, sessile oak and pedunculate oak in association with other species such as downy birch, rowan, holly and hazel. The ground layer is often rich in ferns, woodland wildflowers including bluebells, wild garlic and great wood-rush, and shrubs such as bramble and bilberry. These woods can also contain many rare species of fungi and lichen.

Rostrevor Oakwood overlooking Carlingford Lough is the most established oakwood in the District. It is designated an ASSI as well as a National Nature Reserve (NNR) and is open to the public. Another Oakwood in the District is Bohill Forest Nature Reserve. This small deciduous woodland contains native trees that have naturally regenerated since the site was clear felled in the past. The reserve was established and is now managed to protect the holly blue butterfly. This woodland also supports red deer and woodland birds such as the jay, goldcrest and tit species.

Wet Woodland

Wet woodlands are a range of woods that occur on poorly drained or waterlogged soils such as around lake shores, along streams, on hill-side flushes and on fens and cutover bogs. Typically wet woodlands are dominated by willow, alder or downy birch and can often occur as habitat mosaics with other woodland types.

Examples of wet woodland in the District can be found at Cappagh Lough and St. Peter's Lough which are predominately willow and alder carr. Wet woodland has also developed undisturbed in Hollymount Forest (NNR) since 1745 and, under the dense canopy of alder and willow trees, yellow flag iris and other wetland plants dominate the ground.

Parkland

Parkland is a special type of woodland that is generally not common in NI. They are designed landscapes associated with significant houses or demesnes. There is generally a mosaic of habitats including open grown veteran trees set in pasture or heathland, specimen trees, boundary features, woodland blocks, streams, rivers and natural or constructed lakes. Parklands are important for a wide variety of species from grasses, lower plants and invertebrates to birds, bats and mammals.

Examples of parkland in Newry, Mourne and Down District include Mourne Park, Creggan Poet's Glen, Derrymore House, Castleward, Delamont Country Park, Castlewellan Forest Park and Seaforde House.

Species-rich Hedgerows

Hedges are defined as linear boundaries, comprised of planted shrubs. Species-rich hedgerows are those which contain five or more native woody species on average in a 30 metre length or those with a rich flora of herbaceous plants such as primrose, wood anemone, lords and ladies, bluebell and herb-robert at their base. Hedges are an integral part of Ireland's landscape and a valuable habitat for local biodiversity.

Hedgerows act as very important wildlife corridors for many species, providing connectivity between habitats allowing dispersal and movement. They support many species of birds, mammals and insects.

Hedgerows are found throughout the District, typically adjacent to semi-natural habitats and low intensity farmland.

Key Woodland Species

Red Squirrel

Catching a glimpse of our native red squirrel is a moment to be treasured. As a shy creature, the red squirrel spends most of its time in the tree tops of mainly coniferous woods. The biggest threat comes from the grey squirrel, which was introduced from North America. The grey squirrel is bigger, bolder and has a less specialised diet compared to the red. It also transmits the deadly pox virus to the reds. As the grey squirrel expands its range, it is replacing the red squirrel, especially in deciduous woodland.

The Tollymore and Ring of Gullion and Cooley Red Squirrel Groups are actively involved in conserving the red squirrel population through recording and providing supplementary food.

Song Thrush

A familiar and popular songbird whose numbers are declining seriously. It is a brown bird with a white (or yellow-white) chest densely sprinkled with arrow head spots. It occurs in gardens, farmland and woodland edges and feeds on insects, worms and snails.

Pipistrelle Bats

There are three species of pipistrelle in Northern Ireland: common, soprano and the newly recorded, nathusius' pipistrelle. These flying mammals forage along edges such as tree lines, large hedgerows and water edges. Using echolocation (use of echoes), a single individual can eat up to 3,000 insects in one night! Hibernation occurs from November to April after which females give birth to a single pup that they can recognise individually by smell and sound. For further information on local bat species visit the Northern Ireland Bat Group's website: www.bats-ni.org.uk

Local Action for Species

Of the wide variety of species found in the Newry, Mourne and Down District, 12 (individual species and groups of species) have been selected for priority action (see the table below). Other species not selected for specific action will still benefit from the Habitat Action Plans (HAPs).

Species	Description	Threats	Local Actions
Bats Picture	Bats are one of the smallest mammals in NI, commonly found in buildings, trees, caves and bridges. Despite their widespread occurrence, they are afforded European protection due to their sensitivity to habitat change and vulnerability to persecution.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of roost sites, such as buildings, trees and bridges • Loss of foraging areas and wildlife corridors • Poisoning e.g. water pollution and chemicals used in timber treatment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness of bats through bat walks/talks in the area in partnership with the NI Bat Group • Guide Council and other organisations on their legislative duties with regards bats and development • Provide advice to members of the public on bat conservation
Breeding Waders Picture	Breeding waders live and breed in wetland habitats, wet grassland, hay meadows, unimproved pasture and in some upland areas where there is a good supply of invertebrates. They include lapwing, redshank, curlew and snipe.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drainage • Agricultural improvement • Predation on small fragmented populations • Disturbance relating to development and dogs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with landowners where waders occur to encourage sensitive management • Highlight the threats to waders through media and guided walks and talks • Encourage

			<p>responsible rambling in sensitive areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the recording of waders across the district
<p>Bumblebees</p> <p>Picture</p>	<p>There are 20 species of bumblebee on the island of Ireland of which one third are threatened with extinction and an additional 3 species are near threatened. Most people will see 6 bumblebee species in their gardens and this makes up 95% of the bumblebees present in NI. They are normally associated with flower rich grasslands, vibrant gardens and species rich hedgerows.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fragmentation and loss of suitable habitat due to development and the intensification of agriculture • Pesticides 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness of the plight of the bumblebee, the threats they face and how to help through press releases and events • Manage key Council owned sites to improve for pollinators and act as best practice examples • Work in partnership to improve road side verges and other greenspace across the district
<p>Fish Species</p> <p>Picture</p>	<p>Fish play an important part in freshwater habitats in NI and contribute greatly to our economy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pollution • Physical barriers to migration • Exploitation from netting and angling • Physical degradation of spawning and nursery habitats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to develop fish population studies for a number of important rivers and tributaries in the district • Work with rivers agency to improve the habitat where appropriate
<p>House Sparrow</p>	<p>A common bird in many gardens.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of food and winter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness of the House

Picture	Numbers have dropped in certain areas due to a lack of insect food in summer and winter seed.	<p>stubble</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predation by cats and sparrowhawks • Reduction in nest sites due to modern building methods 	<p>sparrow through media and events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote wildlife friendly gardening and recording of the house sparrow
Juniper Picture	A prickly shrub which tends to be found in exposed areas such as rocky outcrops. It is one of only three conifers native to Ireland.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grazing • Burning • Scrub clearance • Vegetational succession 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness of the species through education and events • Promote further recording through talks with public and landowners • Work with partners such as MHT to help create more self-sustaining populations of Juniper
Marine Mammals Picture	Northern Ireland has two species of seals and 24 species of cetacean (whales, dolphins & porpoises) have been recorded in Irish waters, with 8 species regular visitors or residents to our shores.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pollution – agricultural run-off, litter, oil spills and acoustic pollution • Ship/boat strikes • Open net fishing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organise one event per year to promote recording in the district • Promote schemes such as WiSe through talks with local boat owners • Assist/support local groups with coastal clean-ups
Marsh Fritillary Picture	The marsh fritillary is a medium-sized colourful butterfly. The bright orange, yellow and white chequers on the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss and reduced quality of breeding habitat as a result of agricultural 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness of the Marsh Fritillary and promote recording through press

	wings are in contrast with the dark brown background. Both sexes look similar but the female is the larger. In June and early July the marsh fritillary is on the wing.	improvement along with fragmentation of habitat <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parasitic wasps and other predators such as spiders, bugs and ground beetles can also cause fluctuations in populations 	releases and events such as the Big Butterfly Count <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with partners to improve habitat for marsh fritillary across the district • Assist with monitoring of populations where possible
Otter Picture	Otters live in a variety of habitats including freshwater rivers, lakes and coasts. Signs of otters have been recorded throughout the district.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pollution e.g. farm waste, pesticides and oil spills • Habitat loss through drainage and removal of bankside vegetation • Accidental death e.g. road traffic accidents and drowning in fishing equipment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness of the importance of otters through press releases and events/talks • Promote recording and surveying for otter • Construct an artificial otter holt by way of demonstration to the public
Red Kite Picture	This magnificently graceful bird of prey is unmistakable with its reddish-brown body, angled wings and deeply forked tail. It was saved from national extinction by one of the world's longest running protection programmes, and has now been successfully re-introduced to NI (in 2008).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poisoning - Illegal poison baits set for foxes or crows are indiscriminate and kill protected birds and other animals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to support the 'RKites' project and assist with raising awareness of the Red Kite • Work with RSPB and other partners to hold one public event/talk per year focusing on the red kite
Red Squirrel	Our native squirrel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grey squirrels – 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold events

<p>Picture</p>	<p>is a shy creature of a reddish colour, with a bushy tail and ear tufts. They spend most of their time high in the tree canopy mainly in coniferous woodland. The spread of the non-native grey squirrel is threatening the reds.</p>	<p>outcompete the red for habitat and food</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disease - The parapox virus which is carried and spread by the greys 	<p>to raise awareness of the red squirrel e.g. Red Squirrel Week</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote recording of the red squirrel by members of the public and local groups • Work with the local red squirrel groups to raise awareness • Support local efforts to re-establish or increase red squirrel populations
<p>Yellowhammer</p> <p>Picture</p>	<p>These buntings occur in arable and mixed farming areas in the District. The male yellowhammer is unmistakable with his bright yellow head and chest. During the winter they feed on grain and seeds whereas throughout the summer breeding season they feed on insects.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes in land management from mixed farming to livestock production • Use of pesticides • Inappropriate management of hedgerows 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase awareness and recording through at least one press release and event per year • Support the RSPB and other partners in their work with yellowhammers • Work with DAERA to promote entry and commitment to arable options in agri-

			<p>environment schemes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pilot suitable sites for giant bird table on council owned land
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Do your bit for Newry, Mourne and Down's biodiversity!

In order for the Newry, Mourne and Down LBAP to be successful, it is important to have the support and involvement of local people and local organisations. There are a number of ways in which you as an individual or organisation can get involved and play a vital part in enhancing and maintaining Newry, Mourne and Down Districts biodiversity.

Farmers and Land owners

You can greatly contribute to this LBAP through managing your land or sections of it in a way that will benefit local wildlife, particularly farmland birds. For example;

- Sign up to an agri-environment scheme if eligible, to add further benefit to wildlife
- Follow the codes of good agricultural practice
- Leave field margins uncut later in the season for birds, insects and mammals
- Restrict any cutting of hedgerows to every other year to allow some stretches to flower and fruit each autumn
- Cut hedgerows as late as possible in the season, ideally February, so seeds, nuts and berries are available to wildlife

You can find out more about Agri-environment schemes by contacting your local DAERA office.

Community Groups

- Create a community wildlife garden and increase your local sense of pride and stewardship for the environment
- Help plant a woodland or preserve a local bog for the future
- Work in conjunction with a local school to develop biodiversity projects
- Help implement your LBAP by starting a community project – contact the Newry, Mourne and Down Biodiversity Officer to find out how

Businesses

- Sponsor a local biodiversity project and help make it happen
- Create your own wildlife garden in your company grounds. You could build an insect hotel or even sow a small wildflower meadow
- Take part in team building days by allowing staff to volunteer on local conservation projects which will give them new skills and help local biodiversity

Individuals

- Help build a better picture of local biodiversity and become a wildlife recorder. Record any sightings of important wildlife and report these to the Biodiversity Officer or directly to the Ulster Museum's recording centre, CEDaR (www.nmni.com/CEDaR).

- Have a go at wildlife gardening and enjoy the small wonders in your own patch. Or why not create a street garden and encourage your neighbours to do one thing for biodiversity in their gardens too!
- Use natural resources more sensitively, for example create your own compost heap, reducing your waste and the need for peat compost, or use a water butt to reduce water usage.
- Report wildlife crime. Incidents such as dumping and water pollution should not be ignored as these have an impact on local biodiversity. See our signposting page for contact details of where to report wildlife crime.
- Volunteer! There are always local projects that need the help of volunteers and give people a chance to learn about helping their local wildlife. These could be tree planting days, bird box making or scrub clearance for example. Not only will you learn about conservation techniques but you will also be getting fit in the process!

To find out more about the Newry, Mourne and Down LBAP project please contact:

Newry, Mourne and Down Biodiversity Officer
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Offices
O'Hagan House
Monaghan Row
Newry
BT35 8DJ

Telephone: 0300 013 2233 Email: Danielle.begley@nmandd.org
Web: www.newrymournedown.org

Finding out more about Biodiversity

If you would like to find out more about biodiversity, please visit the websites listed below or contact the organisations.

- Biodiversity in Northern Ireland - www.biodiversityni.com
- British Trust for Ornithology - www.bto.org
- Butterfly Conservation - www.butterfly-conservation.org
- Centre for Environmental Data and Recording (CEDaR)
www.nmni.com/cedar
- Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs -
www.daera-ni.gov.uk
- Ecoschools - <http://www.eco-schoolsni.org/>
- Forest Service - www.dardni.gov.uk/forestry
- Habitas - www.habitas.org.uk
- Loughs Agency - www.loughs-agency.org
- Mourne Heritage Trust - www.mournelive.com
- National Biodiversity Data Centre - <http://www.biodiversityireland.ie/>
- National Trust - www.nationaltrust.org.uk
- Northern Ireland Bat Group - www.bats-ni.org.uk
- Northern Ireland Environment Link - www.nienvironmentlink.org
- Northern Ireland Fungi Group - www.nifg.org.uk/
- Ring of Gullion AONB - www.ringofgullion.org
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds - www.rspb.org.uk
- Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership – www.strangfordlough.org
- The Conservation Volunteers - www.tcv.org.uk
- Ulster Wildlife - www.ulsterwildlife.org
- Walk NI – www.walkni.com
- Waterways Ireland - <http://www.waterwaysireland.org/>
- Water Management Unit - www.doeni.gov.uk/niea/water
- Woodland Trust - www.woodlandtrust.org.uk

1. DOES YOUR ORGANISATION HAVE A PROJECT OR SCHEME THAT AIMS TO DELIVER ON ACTIONS WITHIN THIS LBAP IN THE NEXT 5 YEARS? IF SO, PLEASE RESPOND TO THIS CONSULTATION WITH YOUR DETAILS AND THEY WILL BE INCLUDED IN THIS SIGNPOSTING PAGE.

Where to report wildlife crime and pollution

Police Service NI

Wildlife crime includes offences like poaching, killing or disturbing protected species or damaging their breeding and resting places. Where you suspect that an incident is a wildlife crime then you should report it to the local PSNI either at the nearest police station or by telephoning 101. Make sure you state that you believe a 'wildlife crime' has taken place and always ask for a crime reference number to allow you to follow up any action.

Water Pollution Hotline

There is a hotline for urgent water pollution incidents. Members of the public are asked to call the following telephone number if they become aware of such an incident **Tel: 0800 80 70 60**. This service must be used to report all **urgent** water pollution incidents.

Grounded or injured bats in your building

Call CEDaR (Centre for Environmental Data and Recording) in the first instance to report the case. Email: cedar.info@nmni.com, or telephone: 028 9039 5264. Outside of hours, contact the Northern Ireland Bat Group or see their website for guidance <https://www.bats-ni.org.uk/what-to-do-if-you-find-a-bat/>

Appendix 1. Newry, Mourne and Down Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2017 – 2022

This table outlines the overarching objectives and key actions of the Newry, Mourne and Down LBAP;

- Conserve and enhance the rich biodiversity of the District for both current and future generations;
- Educate and raise awareness of the importance and variety of biodiversity found within the Newry, Mourne and Down District, and;
- Encourage local ownership of Newry, Mourne and Down District's biodiversity.

Strategic Objective	Key Actions	Lead Partner	Key Milestones
1. Conserve and enhance the rich biodiversity of the district for both current and future generations	1.1 Ensure NMDDC deliver on the statutory biodiversity duty through implementation of the NMD LBAP, delivery of internal Biodiversity Implementation Plans(BIPs) and input into relevant projects and programmes	NMDDC	- NMD LBAP launched by September 2017 - NMD Corporate Biodiversity Implementation Plan drafted by September 2017 - LBAP actions and BIPs reviewed annually
	1.2 Develop a Local Non-native Invasive Species Strategy	NMDDC, ROG, MHT	- Non-native Invasive Species Strategy drafted by April 2019 - Local problem areas identified and control options/funding investigated by September 2019
	1.3 Participate in and encourage landscape-scale biodiversity conservation projects across	All	- 2 projects ongoing by 2020

	the district		
2. Educate and raise awareness of the importance and variety of biodiversity found within the Newry, Mourne and Down District	2.1 Host and promote a programme of biodiversity themed events, talks and workshops	NMDDC, RSPB, UW, SLLP, NT and others	- Biodiversity events included in weekly 'what's on guides' from the visitors information centre and updated quarterly on Council and Biodiversity NI websites and facebook pages - Other events to be fed through biodiversity officer for publicising on NMDDC and Biodiversity NI pages
	2.2 Publicise information about biodiversity through the media using press releases and any other opportunities	NMDDC	As required
	2.3 Encourage national and regional wildlife recording schemes and the submission of all wildlife records to CEDaR and National Biodiversity Data Centre	All	Seasonal recording schemes promoted every year e.g. the Big Garden Birdwatch, Butterfly Count etc
	2.4 Produce local biodiversity interpretation and signs at sites of wildlife interest across the district	All	Minimum of one produced per year
	2.5 Assist local schools with relevant eco-	NMDDC	As required

	schools targets e.g. biodiversity and school grounds objectives		
3. Encourage local ownership of Newry, Mourne and Down District's biodiversity	3.1 Help and signpost local communities in developing wildlife projects such as planting mini woodland, creating patches of wildflower meadow or organising wildlife themed events	NMDDC, ROG, SLLP, MHT	- Minimum of 3 projects or events annually
	3.2 Provide encouragement and support to key stakeholders, local environmental organisations and communities	All	As required
	3.3 Highlight opportunities for people to get involved in nature conservation and outdoor activities which in turn lead to better mental and physical health	All	Regular email circulars and press releases on local opportunities