

Local Development Plan 2032
Draft Plan Strategy

Sustainability Appraisal (SA)

Scoping Report



**Ards and
North Down**
Borough Council

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Local Development Plan 2032

Draft Plan Strategy

September 2025

Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment)

Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report

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This Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report has been prepared by the Shared Environmental Service (SES) in conjunction with the Ards and North Down Borough Council.

Consultation Arrangements

Pre-consultation

The Council is launching the draft Plan Strategy (DPS) four weeks in advance of a formal eight-week period of consultation. This pre-consultation period shall run from 18 September 2025 to 16 October 2025.

Formal Consultation

The formal consultation on the DPS shall commence for an eight-week period on the 17 October 2025, closing at 4.30pm on 15 December 2025.

Representations can also be submitted during the consultation period regarding the associated appraisal documents, namely the Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating the Strategic Environmental Assessment), the draft Habitats Regulations Assessment, draft Equality Impact Assessment and draft Rural Needs Impact Assessment.

Representations received after the closing date will not be considered.

During the formal consultation period, the Council's LDP team will host a series of drop-in public consultation events and information sessions. Further information on these events will be publicised via the Council's website, social media channels and local newspapers.

Availability of the Draft Plan Strategy

The DPS document together with its supporting documents, including the Sustainability Appraisal, is available to view on the Council's website

<https://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/resident/planning>

These documents are also available to view at the following Council offices during office hours:

- City Hall, The Castle, Bangor, BT20 4BT
- 2 Church Street, Newtownards, BT23 4AP

The DPS and supporting documents can be supplied in alternative formats; please submit your request and requirements to the above postal addresses or by emailing the LDP team at LDP@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

How to Respond

Representations are welcomed to the DPS and supporting documents as follows:

Online (preferred)

<https://ards-northdown.govocal.com/en-GB/>

Email

planning@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

Post

LDP Team
Ards and North Down Borough Council
2 Church Street,
Newtownards
BT23 4AP

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAP	Area of Archaeological Potential
ACMD	Area(s) of Constraint on Minerals Development
ADAP	Ards and Down Area Plan
AEP	Annual Exceedance Probability
AFBI	Agri Food and Biosciences Institute
A&ND	Ards and North Down
ANDBC	Ards and North Down Borough Council
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
APSFR	Area of Potentially Significant Flood Risk
AQMA	Air Quality Management Area
ARK	Access Research Knowledge
ASAI	Area(s) of Significant Archaeological Interest
ASSI	Area of Special Scientific Interest
ATC	Area(s) of Townscape Character
AVC	Area(s) of Village Character
AWB	Artificial Waterbody
BARNI	Buildings at Risk in Northern Ireland
BC	Borough Council
BMAP	Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan
BMI	Body Mass Index
BMTP	Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan
BRCD	Belfast Region City Deal
CA	Conservation Area
CCC	Committee on Climate Change
CCRA	Climate Change Risk Assessment
CO2	Carbon Dioxide
DAERA	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
DE	Department of Education
DFE	Department for the Economy
DFI	Department for Infrastructure
DLA	Disability Living Allowance
DPS	Draft Plan Strategy
DWI	Drinking Water Inspectorate
EA	Education Authority
EAPP	Environmental Assessments of Plans and Projects
EC	European Commission
EEC	European Economic Commission
ESCR	Earth Science Conservation Site
EU	European Union
FRMP	Flood Risk Management Plan
GB	Great Britain
GEP	Good Ecological Potential
GES	Good Ecological Status
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
GIS	Geographical Information System
GSNI	Geological Survey of Northern Ireland

HARNI	Heritage at Risk in Northern Ireland
HED	Historic Environment Division
HGI	Housing Growth Indicator
HGV	Heavy Goods Vehicle
HIP	Housing Investment Plan
HMWB	Heavily Modified Waterbody
HRA	Habitats Regulations Assessment
HSNI	Health Survey for Northern Ireland
ICOMOS	International Council on Monuments and Sites
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IDBR	Inter Departmental Business Register
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
JNCC	Joint Nature Conservation Committee
KSI	Key Sustainability Issue
LBAP	Local Biodiversity Action Plan
LCA	Landscape Character Area
LDP	Local Development Plan
LGD	Local Government District
LLPA	Local Landscape Policy Area
LPP	Local Policies Plan
LTS	Local Transport Study
LWS	Local Wildlife Sites
MCAA	Marine and Coastal Access Act
MCG	Marine Coordination Group
MCZ	Marine Conservation Zone
MDMNI	Multiple Deprivation Measures NI
MHWST	Mean High Water Spring Tide
MPS	Marine Policy Statement
NB	Neagh Bann
NDAAP	North Down and Ards Area Plan
NE	North East(ern)
NED	Natural Environment Division
NEET	Not in Employment or Training
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NI	Northern Ireland
NICCAP	Northern Ireland Climate Change Adaptation Programme
NIE	Northern Ireland Electricity
NIEA	Northern Ireland Environment Agency
NIHE	Northern Ireland Housing Executive
NIMDM	Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measures
NINIS	Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Information Service
NIRLCA	Northern Ireland Regional Landscape Character Assessment
NISRA	Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency
NIW	Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency
NMDDC	Newry, Mourne and Down District Council
NO	Nitrogen Oxide(s)
NW	North West(ern)
PFRA	Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment

PIP	Personal Independence Payment
PPS	Planning Policy Statemetn
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland
PWS	Private Water Supply
RAF	Royal Air Force
RBD	River Basin District
RBMP	River Basin Management Plan
RDS	Regional Development Strategy
RLCA	Regional Landscape Character Area
ROMP	Review of Old Mineral Permissions
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
RWB	River Waterbody
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SEHCT	South Eastern Health Care Trust
SERC	South Eastern Regional College
SLNCI	Site of Local Nature Conservation Importance
SME	Small/Medium Enterprise
SOA	Super Output Area
SONI	System Operator for Northern Ireland
SOP	Statement of Progress
SPA	Special Protection Area
SPPS	Strategic Planning Policy Statement
SRN	Shared Rural Network
TAPSFR	Transitional Areas of Potential Significant Flood Risk
UK	United Kingdom
UKCP	United Kingdom Climate Projections
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UWWT	Urban Waste Water Treatment
WANE	Wildlife and Natural Environment (Act)
WFD	Water Framework Directive
WMG	Waste Management Group
WMU	Water Management Unit
WTW	Water Treatment Works
WWTW	Waste Water Treatment Works

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of this Scoping Report

This Scoping Report is the second formal output of the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) process for the Ards and North Down Borough Council (ANDBC) Local Development Plan (LDP). It updates and builds on the Scoping Report prepared alongside the Preferred Options Paper (POP) and issued for consultation in May 2019. It presents information about the topics being assessed under the SA which incorporates Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). The Scoping Report will be updated throughout the Plan preparation and will be included with all SA Reports published as part of the consultation process for the LDP.

1.2 Ards and North Down Borough Council Local Development Plan

The current LDP timetable was published in July 2020 and sets out indicative timeframes for the key stages in the production of the LDP. Section 3 of this report describes the approach we are taking to plan preparation in more detail and provides an overview of the Council area. The Borough shares its boundary with three neighbouring Councils - Belfast City Council, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council, and Newry, Mourne and Down District Council. It is also connected to the marine area indirectly and directly through its watercourses and its extensive coastline. Ards and North Down Borough Council will continue to engage with these neighbouring Councils and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) throughout the LDP process to address cross-cutting issues and identify how these can be best taken forward as part of the plan process. This is particularly important in relation to the delivery of key elements of the Regional Development Strategy to ensure a holistic approach to strategic matters is pursued and for policies to be complementary.

1.3 Sustainable Development

The Northern Ireland Sustainable Development Strategy - '*Everyone's Involved*'¹ states that sustainability policy "*is driven by intergenerational equity; to secure a quality of life for present and future generations that is positive and rewarding.*"

Achieving sustainable development is a requirement set out in Provision 25 of The Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006. This requires all Departments and Councils in Northern Ireland, in exercising their functions, to act in the way they consider best calculated to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. In doing this they must have regard to any strategy or guidance relating to sustainable development published by Northern Ireland departments.

Within planning legislation, Section 5 of The Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (as amended) requires those who exercise any function in relation to LDPs to do so with the objective of furthering sustainable development.

SA is the approach used to promote sustainable development within LDPs by evaluating the social, environmental and economic effects of all aspects of the LDP throughout its preparation.

The Sustainable Development Strategy identifies 32 strategic objectives in the following Priority Areas:

- Building a dynamic, innovative economy that delivers the prosperity required to tackle disadvantage and lift communities out of poverty.
- Strengthening society so that it is more tolerant, inclusive and stable and permits positive progress in quality of life for everyone.

¹ NI Executive (2010) *Everyone's Involved* - Sustainable Development Strategy

- Driving sustainable, long-term investment in key infrastructure to support economic and social development.
- Striking an appropriate balance between the responsible use and protection of natural resources in support of a better quality of life and a better quality environment.
- Ensuring reliable, affordable and sustainable energy provision and reducing our carbon footprint.
- Ensuring the existence of a policy environment which supports the overall advancement of sustainable development in and beyond Government.

1.4 Strategic Environmental Assessment

SEA is a systematic process for assessing potential effects of proposed plans or programmes to ensure that significant environmental impacts are considered from the earliest opportunity and addressed in decision making. It was introduced by the European Directive 2001/42/EC 'On the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment' ('the SEA Directive'). In Northern Ireland, the SEA Directive's requirements are taken forward through The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes (EAPP) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004. The EAPP (NI) Regulations set out more detailed requirements for the process and content of the environmental assessment of plans and development. Appendix 1 of this report records how these regulations are being complied with.

1.5 Integrated Sustainability Appraisal

Section 25 of The Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006 requires that all NI Departments and Councils, in exercising their functions, act in the way they consider best calculated to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.

Section 5 of The Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 ('the 2011 Act') requires those who exercise any function in relation to LDPs to do so with the objective of furthering sustainable development. In addition, Sections 8(6) and 9(7) of the 2011 Act requires an appraisal of sustainability to be carried out for the Plan Strategy (PS) and Local Policies Plan (LPP), respectively.

The approach in this report is informed by Development Plan Practice Note 04: 'Sustainability Appraisal incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment'¹. SA therefore refers to an integrated approach which fully incorporates SEA and fulfils the requirements for both SA and SEA.

1.6 Stages in Sustainability Appraisal

The key stages of Sustainability Appraisal are summarised in the following table, with their location in this report or in accompanying reports identified.

¹ Department of the Environment (2015) Development Plan Practice Note 04: Sustainability Appraisal incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment

Table 1.6.1: Stages of Sustainability Appraisal

Stage	Description	Location
Stage A (1) Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report	Identify other relevant policies, plans, programmes and Sustainability Objectives.	Appendix 4 and Chapter 6 of this report. Policies, plans and programmes are also referenced in 5.1 – 5.14.
	Collect baseline information	Chapters 4 & 5 of this report.
	Consult the Consultation Body on the scope of the Sustainability Appraisal Report.	Prior to POP consulted NIEA 19/07/18, response received 14/08/18, (separate response from HED received 07/08/18). Formally consulted DAERA on SA Interim and Scoping Reports on 17/05/19 and response received 08/08/19. DAERA SEA team was re-consulted on 21/12/2023 on the SA Scoping for the draft Plan Strategy stage; their response was received 25/01/2024. Where applicable, recommendations have been incorporated into the SA (refer to Appendix 6 of this report).
	Identify environmental issues and challenges	Section 5 of this report.
	Develop the Sustainability Appraisal Framework	Section 6 of this report.
	Produce draft Scoping Report and share with stakeholders	Section 2.3 of this report.
Stage A (2) Sustainability Appraisal Interim Report	Publication of Sustainability Appraisal Interim Report, assessment of reasonable alternatives against agreed Sustainability Appraisal framework and undertaking public consultation along with the Preferred Options Paper (POP).	Sustainability Appraisal Interim Report, published for consultation alongside the POP in May 2019.
Stage B	Assessment of alternatives and any likely significant effects on the draft plan against Sustainability Appraisal framework, taking into account the evidence base and where necessary, proposing mitigation measures for alleviating any adverse effects.	Section 3 and Appendix 4 of the Sustainability Appraisal Report. Strategic Alternatives were also assessed in the Sustainability Appraisal Interim Report published for

		consultation with the POP in May 2019.
Stage C	Sustainability Appraisal Report to document the appraisal process and findings.	The Sustainability Appraisal Report, which is published with the dPS.
Stage D	Consultation with the public, environmental authorities and any EU member state affected on the Sustainability Appraisal Report and draft plan.	The Sustainability Appraisal Report will be forwarded to the Consultation body under Reg. 12(2) and transboundary consultation carried out under Reg.13, if applicable. The Sustainability Appraisal Report is published along with the draft Plan Strategy for public consultation.
Stage E	Sustainability Appraisal Statement to show how the Sustainability Appraisal and opinions/consultations have been taken into account, the reasons for choosing the plan as adopted and the proposed measures to monitor the plan.	Not at this stage - a Sustainability Appraisal Adoption Statement will be prepared following Independent Examination once the Plan Strategy is ready to be adopted.
Stage F	Monitoring: Establishing arrangements to monitor the significant effects of the implementation of the plan, to identify unforeseen adverse effects and undertake appropriate remedial action.	Not at this stage - a preliminary framework for potential monitoring is included in Chapter 5 of the Sustainability Appraisal Report.

1.7 Other Assessments

1.7.1 Habitats Regulations Assessment

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) is a provision of The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended). The regulations require assessment of possible adverse effects on the integrity of European sites (Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas) as a result of plans and policies in the LDP. Assessment is also carried out for Ramsar sites (wetlands of international importance designated under the provisions of the Ramsar Convention). A draft HRA of the draft Plan Strategy is published for consultation with the Draft Plan Strategy. HRA will also be carried out for the draft Local Policies Plan. The HRAs will be finalised when each Plan is adopted.

1.7.2 Rural Proofing

The Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016, which came in to force on 1 June 2017, applies to NI Government Departments and Councils. It states that “*A public authority must have due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans.*” Public authorities must report annually on how they have implemented this requirement.

The approach to considering rural needs is called ‘rural proofing’ and DAERA has provided advice on carrying it out in ‘*Thinking Rural: The Essential Guide to Rural Proofing*’¹ and ‘A

¹ Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (2015) Thinking Rural: The Essential Guide To Rural Proofing.

*Guide to the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 for Public Authorities (Revised)*¹.

Rural proofing is the process by which all major policies and strategies are assessed to determine whether they have a differential impact on rural areas. Where appropriate, adjustments are made to take account of particular rural circumstances. The Council has reported on rural proofing in their Rural Needs Impact Assessment of the draft Plan Strategy, which has been published alongside the draft Plan Strategy.

This SA Scoping Report considers rural populations and how the LDP could affect them in the evidence base for the community topic. Data on rural populations, where available, is also included under other topics, for example health, education and infrastructure. Key Sustainability Issues for the Borough include some that are specific to rural communities and the appraisal prompts include questions about how a proposal will meet the needs of rural populations or will potentially have a disproportionate impact.

1.8 Scoping Report Structure

Section 2 of this report details the proposed approach to Sustainability Appraisal while Section 3 provides an overview of plan preparation. Section 4 gives an overview of the baseline information and each topic is reported on in Section 5 with the context, relevant baseline information, trends, key issues and the implications for the LDP. Section 6 presents the Sustainability Framework and outlines the next steps in the SA.

¹ Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (2018) A Guide to the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 for Public Authorities (Revised).

2. SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL: THE APPROACH

2.1 Introduction

This section describes the overall approach taken to SA throughout the LDP process. Sections 4 to 6 are the application of this approach for the Scoping Report for the Ards and North Down Borough Council LDP.

2.2 Principles

The SA process is carried out under the following principles:

Role

SA is a tool to aid plan-making which identifies potential effects of options, and how these may be mitigated or enhanced, with a view to informing on the most appropriate option. It does not, however, give a 'right' answer and is not the decision-making mechanism.

Integrated

SA is an essential part of the plan-making process. It is integral to and carried out through the whole of plan preparation and subsequent monitoring. It helps to test the effects of options and inform the selection of proposals. It will provide evidence of the decision-making process and any changes brought about to ensure sustainability of the LDP.

Shared Information

Where appropriate, data collected for other purposes such as LDP Position Papers or Community Planning indicators were used for evidence or for future monitoring.

Relevant

The SA focuses on context and data that is relevant to the plan. It will not detail issues that cannot be addressed within the remit of the LDP.

Connected

The LDP may be influenced by, or have an impact on, neighbouring areas. The SA considers strategies and plans beyond the Council area, where there is potential for significant positive or negative effects. Neighbouring Councils were invited to comment on the SA Scoping Report and Interim SA Report in May 2019 and they will again be invited to comment on the dPS SA Reports. It is also acknowledged that Ards and North Down has direct connectivity with the marine area along its coastline and indirect connectivity through its watercourses and river systems.

Proportionate

The SA aims to avoid duplication. Therefore, for example, international strategies are not included where they have been given effect in a national or regional strategy. Where more detailed information is available in another document, the essentials are included here and a link provided to that document.

Up-to-date

The SA Reports will be updated during plan preparation to ensure that current policies, plans and programmes are reflected, and baseline data are up-to-date.

Future proof

Potential future changes within and beyond the life of the plan are considered to anticipate needs and to try to maintain opportunities for long term sustainable development.

2.3 Involving Others

Informal and formal consultation with stakeholders and the public is an essential part of SA, to ensure that the topics and issues have been fully considered. The first formal consultation required on this Scoping Report was with the Consultation Body. The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) acts as the lead for the Consultation Body and was consulted on the outline of the SA Scoping Report in August 2018.

Statutory consultees were then invited to comment on the SA reports published at POP stage in May 2019 and DAERA's SEA Team was re-consulted regarding updates to the SA Scoping Report in December 2023. A register of consultation responses has been maintained and a summary is provided in Appendix 6 of this report.

Where possible, experts with general and local knowledge of all topics have been consulted to inform the topic-based Position Papers and Technical Supplements and the evidence base presented in Section 5 of this report

Ards and North Down Borough Council shares boundaries with Belfast City Council, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council, and Newry Mourne and Down District Council. These councils will be invited to comment on the draft Plan Strategy and SA Reports.

The public was formally consulted on the SA Interim Report, together with the SA Scoping Report during a 12-week period in May - August 2019. There will also be public consultation on the SA Reports that accompany the Draft Plan Strategy and Draft Local Policies Plan. Representations at public consultation that are relevant to the SA will be reviewed. Where necessary, the SA Reports will be revised in response to representations and to any changes to the Plan Strategy or Local Policies Plan.

2.4 The Evidence Base

The evidence base is arranged according to a series of topics that correspond with the Sustainability Objectives and for each topic, a consistent approach to reporting is followed. The approach is described in more detail in section 4 of this report and the evidence base is presented in section 5.

The evidence base was prepared using all available information sources. Every effort has been made to ensure that the document refers to the most recent information available, however it is an evolving document and is reviewed and updated at each stage of appraisal.

2.5 The Sustainability Appraisal Framework

The purpose of the SA Framework is to provide a means of ensuring that the social, environmental and economic needs of the area are considered in plan preparation. It enables the effects of plan proposals to be described, analysed and compared. It also helps identify measures to minimise negative effects and enhance positive effects.

The SA Framework consists of Sustainability Objectives with prompts which are used to assess plan proposals against the baseline. All stages of plan-making will be assessed using the Framework, which may be updated as further information becomes available. The SA Reports to accompany the Plan Strategy will include proposed indicators for monitoring any significant effects of delivery of the LDP in relation to the Sustainability Objectives.

2.6 Significant Effects

The SA will assess the significant effects of options, both positive and negative. There is no single definition of a significant effect, therefore assessment is a matter of judgement from discussion that takes account of the extent of the effect spatially and in time.

2.7 Assessment Method

The key stages of the SA are the appraisal of:

- Options and Reasonable Alternatives for the Preferred Options Paper;
- Options and Reasonable Alternatives for the Plan Strategy; and
- Options and Reasonable Alternatives for the Local Policies Plan.

The proposed method for appraising the options is described in section 2.8 below:

2.8 Appraisal of Reasonable Alternatives

In the draft PS, policy options are presented at a strategic and operational level. In some cases, more than one policy option has been assessed, however only reasonable alternatives were considered. The SA Report accompanying the dPS evaluates the policy options using the appraisal matrix shown in Table 2.8.1. The matrix includes:

- The plan topic and delivery options to be assessed
- A score indicating the nature of the effect for each option in the short, medium and long term with an explanation of why the score was given.
- A summary comparing the options and recommending the preferred approach together with any mitigation recommended to address significant negative effects. Where relevant, other measures are identified to enhance positive effects or reduce minor negative effects.

Table 2.8.1: Outline Sustainability Appraisal Matrix

ISSUE												
OPTIONS	Option 1:				Option 2:				Option 3:			
Sustainability Objective	ST	MT	LT	Explanation	ST	MT	LT	Explanation	ST	MT	LT	Explanation
1. Sustainability Objective												
2. Sustainability Objective												
3. Sustainability Objective, etc.												
▪ Summary and comparison of alternative options against the sustainability objectives. ▪ Identification of the most sustainable option. ▪ Identification of the preferred option. ▪ Summary of what, if any, significant effects are envisaged with the preferred option. ▪ Summary of mitigation measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and/or offset as fully as possible any significant adverse effects of the preferred option. ▪ Summary of possible measures to reduce negative effects and promote positive effects.												

Table 2.8.2 Scores and definitions for Sustainability Appraisal Matrix

Rating		Description
++	Significant Positive	Policy/ proposal would greatly help to achieve the objective
+	Minor Positive	Policy/ proposal would slightly help to achieve the objective
0	Neutral / no effect	Policy/ proposal would have no overall effect
-	Minor Negative	Policy/ proposal would slightly conflict with the objective
--	Significant Negative	Policy/ proposal would greatly conflict with the objective
?	Uncertain	The effect cannot be predicted because: - the approach has an uncertain relationship to the objective; or - the relationship is dependent on the way in which the approach is implemented; or - insufficient information is available to enable an appraisal to be made.
ST	Short Term	Up to five years
MT	Medium Term	Five to 15 years
LT	Long term	Over 15 years

2.9 Plan Strategy

The proposals in the draft Plan Strategy will be reviewed and the Scoping Report and SA updated to reflect any changes from the previous stage. This SA Scoping Report and a separate SA Report will be provided in support of the consultation on the draft Plan Strategy.

2.10 Local Policies Plan

In advance of preparation of the Local Policies Plan, criteria will be developed to help guide the appraisal of sites. The proposals in the LPP will be appraised using the SA Framework and a SA Report will be published as part of the consultation on these papers.

2.11 Cumulative Effects

Consideration will be given to any cumulative effects of proposals at each stage of plan preparation. These will include potential cumulative effects within the plan and effects in combination with other relevant plans and strategies. A section on cumulative effects has been included in the SA Report to accompany the draft Plan Strategy.

3. ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

3.1 Context – Requirement to Prepare a Local Development Plan

Part 2 of The Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (the 2011 Act) provides for the preparation of a LDP by a Council for its district, which will (when adopted) replace current development plans. The LDP will comprise two development plan documents;

- The Plan Strategy (PS); and
- The Local Policies Plan (LPP).

The LDP should fulfil the following functions:

- provide a 15-year plan framework to support the economic and social needs of a Council's district in line with regional strategies and policies, while providing for the delivery of sustainable development;
- facilitate sustainable growth by co-ordinating public and private investment to encourage development where it can be of most benefit to the well-being of the community;
- allocate sufficient land to meet society's needs;
- provide an opportunity for all stakeholders, including the public, to have a say about where and how development within their local area should take place;
- provide a plan-led framework for rational and consistent decision-making by the public, private and community sectors and those affected by development proposals; and
- deliver the spatial aspects of a Council's current Community Plan.

3.2 Preparation

The purpose of the Ards and North Down Borough Council LDP is to inform the public, statutory authorities, developers and other interested parties of the policy framework and land use proposals that will implement the strategic objectives of the Regional Development Strategy¹ (RDS) 2035 and guide development decisions within Ards and North Down up to 2032.

The new LDP has been prepared within the context of the Council's Corporate Plan and takes account of the Council's Community Plan to enable us to plan positively for the future of the Council area. It will ensure that land is zoned appropriately and that infrastructure is enhanced to develop the Council area for future generations.

The LDP must also take account of the regional policy context set by the Northern Ireland Executive and Central Government Departments. This includes, amongst others, the Sustainable Development Strategy, the RDS, the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS)² and Planning Policy Statements (PPSs)³, the UK Marine Policy Statement (UK MPS) and, when adopted, the Marine Plan for Northern Ireland. The new LDP will replace the four current statutory development plans that apply to the Borough, as discussed in the POP.

The Plan will be produced in two parts; the Plan Strategy is published first, followed by the Local Policies Plan. The Plan Strategy identifies the aims, objectives, growth strategy and strategic policies applicable to the Plan Area. The Local Policies Plan will provide site-specific policies and proposals, including settlement limits, land use zonings and environmental designations.

¹ DRD (2012) Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035

² DOE (2015) Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS) Planning for Sustainable Development

³ Planning NI Planning Policy Statements and Supplementary Planning Guidance (found at Planning NI https://www.planningni.gov.uk/index/policy/planning_statements_and_supplementary_planning_guidance.htm)

3.3 Overview of Ards and North Down Borough Council Area

Ards and North Down's geographical area is nearly 567 square kilometres or 56,663 hectares with approximately 185 kilometres (115 miles) of coastline, extending from Holywood on the shores of Belfast Lough to Portaferry on the southern tip of the Ards Peninsula and Killinchy to the west of Strangford Lough.

The Borough has a population of 163,659 (2021 Census) usually resident population. The Northern Ireland trend is that while the number of children and people aged 16 to 64 are both projected to decrease over the next 25 years, the number of people 65 and over is projected to increase. Since 2001, the number of pensioners in Ards and North Down has been above the NI average, numbers have increased and are also projected to rise further between 2018 and 2028. The projected proportion change is 23.1% whilst the proportion of working age people is projected to decrease by 1.1% over the same time period.

Census 2021 shows that [of all the LGDs in Northern Ireland] Ards and North Down continues to have the highest percentage of older residents aged over 60 and is the council with lowest percentage population aged under 4 and aged 20-29. The 2021 Census recorded 31 residents aged over 100 within the Borough.

Looking ahead over the next 20 years, the population will continue to be focused on ageing households. This population profile also has implications for a range of issues, such as the need for sustainable employment opportunities to have a balance of demographics and the need to provide opportunity for a mix of housing units and tenures.

Set against strong economic attributes, the Borough is a net exporter of commuters, who live in Ards and North Down but travel outside the Borough for work. This has implications for sustainable travel and also for the ability of local people to find local employment.

Tourism is an important element of the local service economy with the Borough's attractions frequently being those most visited in Northern Ireland.

Traditionally, fishing has been a major industry in certain areas with local communities - such as Portavogie, which is the second largest fishing port in Northern Ireland, after Kilkeel, - remaining at the centre of the trade today.

Each of our city and towns has a distinct character and functions in a locally distinct way. The economy is focused on the principal settlements. Bangor is the Borough's largest town and received the honour of being recognised in the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations as a city. Newtownards has a successful town centre and benefits from a diverse range of retail units, formats and sizes.

Strangford Lough, which is of global environmental importance, forms the central geographical and landscape feature of the area. The conservation of its special natural environment is secured by a variety of statutory international and European designations such as Special Protection Area (SPA), Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Ramsar. It was the first Marine Nature Reserve in Northern Ireland and is also a Marine Conservation Zone. The Outer Ards and Belfast Lough coastlines to the east and north of the Borough also include SPA, SAC and Ramsar designations.

Ards and North Down Borough is rich in varied landscapes, wildlife habitats and heritage features, which together make a positive contribution to its special character and identity.

The Borough's historic environment and built heritage includes buildings of historic architectural significance, historic monuments and archaeological remains, military and industrial heritage. The inshore and offshore region contains a rich archaeological record spanning 9,000 years which originated from the inhabitation or use of the coast. Given the extensive coastline of the Borough.

The Borough's water environment, including the coastline, rivers and reservoirs, is an important resource for recreation, amenity and tourism. It offers specialised habitats, adding to biodiversity.

Settlements of the northern portion of the Borough are well connected and include key link corridors into the Belfast Metropolitan Area. Accessibility to Belfast is further enhanced by bus and NI Railways services, but reliance on the private car remains high. This is particularly true in the small settlements and more rural locations on the Ards Peninsula where public transport availability is less reliable.

Figure 3.3.1 illustrates the principal settlements and transport routes of Ards and North Down Borough Council in its wider context.

Figure 3.3.1: Ards and North Down Borough Council Plan Area



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4. OVERVIEW OF THE BASELINE EVIDENCE

4.1 Presentation of Baseline Evidence

The baseline evidence is presented in Chapter 5 for fourteen topics, which span the social, economic and environmental themes. Several topics contribute to social, economic and environmental themes. Due to these overlaps, Table 4.1 presents an outline scope for each topic to help clarify where information is likely to be presented in this report.

Table 4.1: Scope of Sustainability Topics

Topic	Includes
1. Health and Wellbeing	Health profile, physical activity, access to health care, access to open space and recreation, quiet areas and noise.
2. Community	Community identity, shared space, social inclusion, crime prevention and safety, deprivation and good relations.
3. Housing	Housing, urban capacity and settlements.
4. Education and Skills	Primary through to third level and apprenticeships.
5. Economy and Employment	Employment, economic growth, investment, tourism, industry and commerce, town centres and retailing.
6. Material Assets	Infrastructure relating to energy / heat generation and distribution; telecommunications; waste management and pipelines; derelict and contaminated land; and renewable energy.
7. Physical Resources	Earth science, minerals, land (including land use), soil and geothermal resources.
8. Transport and Accessibility	Public, private transport, traffic and efficient movement.
9. Air	Air quality and short term changes (aspects relating to climate are covered in Climate Change).
10. Climate Change	Northern Ireland in global context of climate change; greenhouse gas emissions; implications of climate change, mitigation and adaptation.
11. Water	Water quality and resources (including coastal), water levels (flood risk).
12. Natural Resources	Biodiversity, fauna, flora, designated sites, green and blue infrastructure, ecosystem services. Includes intertidal and coastal zones, and marine environment.
13. Landscape	Landscape, seascape and countryside/rural area.
14. Historic Environment and Cultural Heritage	Historic environment, archaeology including maritime, built and industrial heritage, townscape and cultural heritage assets.

Each topic is presented using the following structure, and the headings are further explained below:

- Review of Policies, Plans, Programmes and Strategies;
- Baseline information;
- Likely Evolution of the Baseline without the Local Development Plan; and
- Key Sustainability Issues.

4.2 Review of Policies, Plans, Programmes and Strategies

The SA must include a review of other policies, plans, programmes and strategies that have an influence on the content of the LDP. The aims of this review are:

- to identify all external social, economic and environmental objectives which have a bearing on the SA of the LDP;
- to reflect sustainability themes contained in regional policies and strategies;
- to identify any other sustainability issues that might influence the preparation of the plan;
- to highlight whether other policies, plans or programmes might give rise to cumulative effects when combined with the LDP.

Consideration of this context also helps ensure that the LDP will deliver obligations for Ards and North Down Borough Council which are within the scope of the LDP. Appendix 4 presents the strategies, policies, programmes and plans that have been considered with their key objectives and implications for the LDP.

4.3 Strategic Context

The following regional strategies are overarching and form a backdrop to the LDP. Each is introduced here and key relevant aspects are described in more detail under each topic in Section 5.

4.3.1 Regional Development Strategy

The RDS provides a strategic and long term perspective on the future development of Northern Ireland up to 2035 to deliver the spatial aspects of the Programme for Government. It contains regional guidance to provide policy direction in relation to the economy, society and environment. It complements the Sustainable Development Strategy and sets the context for policy and development decisions in order to achieve sustainable development throughout the region.

The RDS recognises the important role of Belfast in generating regional prosperity and that Londonderry is the focus for economic growth in the North West. The RDS also reflects the Programme for Government approach of balanced sub-regional growth, to ensure all areas benefit from economic growth and recognises the importance of key settlements as centres for growth and prosperity. It also recognises there is a need to understand the role and function of settlements and their role in serving rural communities. The RDS promotes co-operation between places and encourages clustering of Hubs so that services do not need to be duplicated but rather shared. The towns recognised in the RDS as having such potential include Newtownards. Bangor is also recognised in the RDS as having a complementary role to play within the Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area.

To ensure all areas benefit from economic growth, the RDS also reflects the Programme for Government approach of balanced sub-regional growth and recognises the importance of key settlements as centres for growth and prosperity. The RDS also recognises that [the former] “*Ards Borough has a mixture of the rural and the urban and given the area’s scenic beauty and historical interest, tourism is a significant and growing part of the local economy. While traditional industries have declined dramatically, Ards is establishing a diverse economy, particularly in the added value food and engineering sectors*”.

The RDS has a statutory basis, is material to decisions on individual planning applications and appeals, and Councils must take account of the RDS when drawing up their LDPs.

4.3.2 Strategic Planning Policy Statement

The Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) provides an overarching statement of the general regional planning principles underlying the reformed plan led system. It provides a planning policy framework which must be taken into account in the preparation of LDPs and the provisions are also material to all decisions on individual planning applications and appeals.

The SPPS outlines a number of core principles underpinning the reformed planning system in Northern Ireland. These are:

- improving health and well-being;
- creating and enhancing shared space;
- supporting sustainable economic growth;
- supporting good design and positive place-making; and
- preserving and improving the built and natural environment.

The latter part of the SPPS contains 72 regional strategic objectives across 16 subject areas, in addition to the introduction of new policy for retailing.

4.3.3 Sustainable Development Strategy

The Sustainable Development Strategy identifies 32 strategic objectives in the following Priority Areas:

- Building a dynamic, innovative economy that delivers the prosperity required to tackle disadvantage and lift communities out of poverty.
- Strengthening society so that it is more tolerant, inclusive and stable and permits positive progress in quality of life for everyone.
- Driving sustainable, long-term investment in key infrastructure to support economic and social development.
- Striking an appropriate balance between the responsible use and protection of natural resources in support of a better quality of life and a better quality environment.
- Ensuring reliable, affordable and sustainable energy provision and reducing our carbon footprint.
- Ensuring the existence of a policy environment which supports the overall advancement of sustainable development in and beyond Government.

The strategic objectives that are key are highlighted under their relevant topic.

4.3.4 Programme for Government

The Programme for Government (PfG) is the highest-level strategic document of the Northern Ireland Executive. It sets out the priorities that the Executive will pursue during its Assembly mandate and the most significant actions it will take to address them.

The Programme for Government 2024-2027 'Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most' aims to deliver on three long term missions: People, Planet and Prosperity underpinned by a cross-cutting commitment to Peace. These missions will be achieved by focusing on nine immediate priorities across the 3 pillars of sustainable development.

The priorities are:

- Grow a Globally Competitive and Sustainable Economy
- Deliver More Affordable, Accessible, High-Quality Early Learning and Childcare
- Cut Health Waiting Times
- Ending Violence Against Women and Girls
- Better Support for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs
- Provide More Social, Affordable and Sustainable Housing
- Safer Communities
- Protecting Lough Neagh and the Environment

■ Reform and Transformation of Public Services

The Planning (Northern Ireland) Act 2011 specifically requires the LDP to take account of the PfG and accordingly, it has been taken into account when preparing the draft Plan Strategy.

4.3.5 UK Marine Policy Statement and Marine Plan for Northern Ireland

The UK MPS, the UK Marine and Coastal Access Act (MCAA) 2009 and the Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013 provide the policy and legislative framework for the management of the marine area in Northern Ireland. The UK vision for the marine environment, set out in the UK MPS, is the attainment of 'clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse oceans and seas'.

The MCAA is a UK-wide Act which includes a number of provisions for the management of the UK's marine area. For Northern Ireland, key provisions within this Act include a licensing system for management of development within the marine area from the mean high water spring tide out to 12 nautical miles (the inshore region).

The Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013 includes duties to protect and enhance the marine area. This includes provisions to prepare and adopt a Marine Plan for the Northern Ireland inshore region; and provision to improve marine conservation and protection. The draft Marine Plan for Northern Ireland is made up of two plans, one for the offshore region under the Marine and Coastal Access Act and one for the onshore region under the Marine Act (NI). The draft Marine Plan for Northern Ireland was consulted on for an eight week period beginning 18 April 2018. Once adopted, its policies will be used by public authorities in taking decisions which affect or might affect the marine area.

Section 58 (3) and (4) of the MCAA and Section 8 (3) of the Marine Act, require a public authority to "*have regard to the appropriate marine policy documents in taking any decision which relates to the exercise of any function capable of affecting the whole or any part of the UK marine area*". This means that all public authorities must have regard to the UK MPS and other relevant policy in the preparation of LDPs and all associated documents. Public authorities must also take any authorisation or enforcement decision in accordance with the appropriate marine policy documents, unless relevant considerations indicate otherwise.

4.3.6 Community Planning

Community Planning is a process whereby Councils, statutory bodies, and the community work together to develop and implement a shared vision for promoting the well-being of their area and pave the way for the most efficient use of scarce resources. It involves everyone working together to make life better for local people and deliver real improvements. It means planning ahead to improve the big issues that matter to people like health, education, employment, safety and the environment.

The Ards and North Down Borough Council Community Plan 2017-2032 is known as '*The Big Plan*' and has a long term vision supported by five outcomes. It provides an overarching framework setting out a shared vision and ambition that Ards and North Down's Strategic Community Planning Partnership has agreed to work towards over the next 15 years.

The vision of *The Big Plan* is for the Council area to be a vibrant, connected, healthy, safe and prosperous place.

The overarching, cross-cutting ambition of *The Big Plan* is to have empowered, resilient individuals and communities; to reduce inequalities; to promote good relations and sustainability; and to improve the accessibility of all public services.

The Big Plan's vision is supported by the following outcomes that will make life better for all the people who live in the Borough:

- All people in Ards and North Down fulfil their lifelong potential.
- All people in Ards and North Down enjoy good health and wellbeing.

- All people in Ards and North Down live in communities where they are respected, are safe and feel secure.
- All people in Ards and North Down benefit from a prosperous economy.
- All people in Ards and North Down feel pride as they have access to a well managed sustainable environment.

4.3.7 Corporate Plan

The Council's Corporate Plan establishes the purpose and the priorities of the Council. The purpose of the Council is to make Ards and North Down the best place to live, work, visit and invest.

The Council's vision of a Sustainable Borough is the heart of the Corporate Plan. The identification of priorities, outcomes, commitments, and measures of success are based on putting in place the conditions needed for Ards and North Down to be A Sustainable Borough. A Sustainable Borough is one where economic, environmental, and social wellbeing are interdependent and decisions that are taken are well-balanced and equitable. Putting sustainability at the core of our Corporate Plan means considering the implications of a changing climate alongside shifting economic and social needs.

To become A Sustainable Borough, three Corporate Priorities have been identified that align with the three pillars of sustainable development. These are:

- Economic: Increased economic growth attracting more businesses and jobs,
- Environmental: Reduced carbon emissions as we transition to net zero, and
- Social: Improved wellbeing through social inclusion and reduced inequality.

4.3.8 Masterplans and Regeneration

Town Centre Masterplans are non-statutory documents which focus on regeneration and public realm improvements. Each of the five towns within the Borough has a Town Centre Masterplan. These aim to ensure that the viability and vitality of the town centres are enhanced and that they are visually attractive to residents, businesses and visitors, whilst also improving the overall accessibility.

There are also several Village Plans extant in the Borough which are currently under review. These plans help to identify and address the current issues facing each village to facilitate economic, environmental, physical and social improvement. These documents have informed the preparation of the POP and will continue to be taken into account throughout the LDP process.

4.4 Baseline Information

A desk-based review has been undertaken to identify baseline conditions in Ards and North Down. Each sustainability topic is presented under Section 5, with a review of relevant current information available. Where it has not been possible to provide Council-specific information, information for Northern Ireland has been used. Where there are critical data gaps, these have been identified.

Information sources include data collected for the LDP position papers published at the POP stage, and for the Community Plan found at

<https://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/resident/community-planning/collecting-the-evidence>.

The baseline topics for the SA have a wider scope than the LDP evidence-gathering requirements. Data sources in Local Development Plans: Environmental Evidence and Information¹ have been referred to, as well as the Northern Ireland Environmental Statistics Reports for relevant years². The Technical Supplements to the draft Plan Strategy were

¹ DAERA (2017) Local Development Plans: DAERA Environmental Evidence and Information (Version 2.1/ May 2017)

² DAERA [online] Northern Ireland Statistics Report (found at <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/northern-ireland-environmental-statistics-report>)

prepared at the same time as the SA was undertaken and form part of a detailed evidence base informing the draft policy options brought forward. Consequently, the SA Scoping Report has not incorporated information directly from these Technical Supplements.

In addition to the LDP and Community Plan evidence, we have used evidence presented on the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) website. NISRA is the principal source of official statistics and social research on Northern Ireland. Much of the data at Council or sub-Council level was sourced from the Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Information Service (NINIS) website. NINIS is part of NISRA and aims to make small area information held within Central Government and Non-Departmental Public Bodies available to as wide an audience as possible. The NINIS website contains datasets on a range of socio-economic themes at small-area statistical geographies.

4.5 Likely Evolution of the Baseline without the Local Development Plan

This section highlights trends in the baseline information and describes how the baseline might evolve without the LDP. This also helps identify key issues for each topic and identifies potential sustainability problems or opportunities that could be addressed through the LDP.

Ards and North Down Borough Council was included within these previous Area Plans prior to April 2015.

- Ards and Down Area Plan 2015 – for the legacy Ards Borough Council area;
- North Down and Ards Area Plan 1984-1995 - for the legacy North Down Borough Council area;
- Belfast Urban Area Plan for a part of Knocknagoney which is now with Ards and North Down Borough area;
- draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (BMAP)¹ – for the legacy North Down Borough Council area; and
- Bangor Town Centre Plan 1995.

These do not reflect the new council area baseline or '*The Big Plan*'.

4.6 Key Sustainability Issues

Drawing on the policies, plans, programmes and strategies review, the baseline information and the likely evolution of the baseline without the LDP, Key Sustainability Issues are set out for each topic. These reflect the local area and are mainly issues that are relevant to and may be influenced by the LDP. These Key Sustainability Issues will also identify the potential for cumulative effects which should be considered in preparation of the LDP. Key Sustainability Issues will be reviewed and, where necessary, updated at key stages of Plan preparation.

4.7 Sustainability Objectives

The Key Sustainability Issues inform the Sustainability Objectives. These are presented in Section 6 with a short rationale and description of what each objective seeks to achieve. There are several overlaps between objectives which support each other.

¹ BMAP was adopted in September 2014, but was subsequently quashed as a result of a judgment in the Court of Appeal delivered on 18 May 2017.

5. THE EVIDENCE BASE

5.1 Health and Well-being

5.1.1 Review of Policies, Plans, Programmes and Strategies

This topic considers the health profile for the Borough, needs for and access to health care, physical activity, and the effects of noise. It overlaps with many of the other topics, for example where they shape the environment in which we live, interactions with others and opportunities for employment and education.

The common thread of relevant policies is that actions should improve the outcomes for everyone's mental and physical health and well-being. Policy measures seek to prolong healthy life and reduce preventable deaths. Contributors to this include improving health in pregnancy and improving mental health, which can have long term effects on healthy life. They also acknowledge that the health conditions of those who are most deprived are significantly worse. Consequently, programmes have been developed such as 'Delivering Social Change', an Executive programme that seeks to reduce inequalities. Northern Ireland health-related strategies are supportive of international strategies and the Sustainable Development Strategy.

Part of supporting good health is encouraging physical activity. There are several strategies and initiatives for this purpose including 'Sport Matters', 'A Fitter Future for All', the 'Outdoor Recreation Action Plan', and 'Exercise, Explore, Enjoy: A Strategic Plan for Greenways'. These include creating the environment and specific facilities to encourage increased physical activity, including active travel. There is a particular focus on groups that have lower rates of activity which is now women and girls, people with disabilities, older people and the most economically disadvantaged.

The 'Transforming your Care: Strategic Implementation Plan' and the South Eastern Health Care Trust's (SEHCT) Delivery Plan, inform infrastructure requirements for health care. 'Making Life Better' is a ten-year strategic framework for public health launched in 2014. It provides direction for policies and actions to improve the health and well-being of the people of Northern Ireland and reduce inequalities in health. Outcome 12 of this framework 'Making the Most of the Physical Environment' is highly relevant to the LDP. Actions can be grouped into the following general themes:

- To improve and maintain the environment in terms of air quality, water quality, waste management and environmental noise;
- To enhance the capacity of our physical infrastructure to protect, support and provide access to healthy and active living and well-being through, for example, creating environments that promote social interaction and mental well-being, are safe for all ages and incentivise physical activity.

The SPPS reflects this, in particular through six regional strategic objectives that require provision of, and accessibility for all, to open space with high standards of design.

The Environmental Noise Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006 locally implement the European Noise Directive, the aim of which is to avoid, prevent or reduce on a prioritised basis the harmful effects, including annoyance, of exposure to environmental noise. The Regulations apply to noise from major road, railway, airport and industrial sources. These existing sources are not subject to planning control, but may be considered in the context of proposed development, which could be affected by environmental noise. A range of legislation is in place to establish permitted noise levels and manage noise emissions from domestic, industrial and commercial sources. The 2014 Noise Policy Statement for Northern Ireland provides clarity on current noise policies and practices.

The Council's Corporate Plan 2024-2028 has the vision of 'A Sustainable Borough' and includes among its strategic outcomes "Opportunities for people to be active and healthy".

In the Community Plan, 'The Big Plan', aspirations are committed up to 2032. Three of the five outcomes - all people will fulfil their lifelong potential; all people will enjoy good health and well-being; and all people will live in communities where they are respected, safe, and feel secure – will be underpinned by ensuring good physical health and mental well-being for all residents of the Borough.

5.1.2 Baseline Information

Detailed information on health and well-being has been provided in the Ards and North Down Borough Council's Community Plan, and in the LDP Position Papers on Population Growth and Housing; and Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation. NISRA has also been referred to and the Health Survey (Northern Ireland) (HSNI)¹. Census 2021 data have been sourced from NISRA and from internal statistics reports prepared by the Council's data and evidence analyst. This topic overlaps with the Community, Housing, Transport and Accessibility, Air Quality, Natural Resources, and Landscape sections of this report.

Population profile

The future population profile of the Borough helps to inform future health care needs, demand for childcare facilities and schools, provision of adequate housing and need for later life care². The 2021 Census recorded 163,664 usual residents in the Borough, an increase of 4.5% from the previous 2011 census figure of 161,725 people (which was an increase of 3.2% over the resident population in the 2001 Census).

NISRA's 2018-based population projections³ predict that the overall population of NI will reach 1.98 million by 2040, a slight reduction from the previous 2014 and 2016-based projections. These projections also predict that the population of Ards and North Down will continue to increase at a modest rate through the plan period, rising to 164,976 in 2031. Relative to other Councils⁴ this figure is around the middle of the range of predicted growth rates, but is still an increasing population⁵. However, in contrast with NI as a whole, the 2018-based projections for Ards and North Down expect that Borough's population will then begin to decline, decreasing to around 163,566 by the end of the published projected period in 2043.

The graphs overleaf show selected data from NISRA's 2018-based population projections for Ards and North Down. They show that population of those aged 65-84 and those aged 85+ in the Borough is projected to increase over the projected period. The number of young people (0-15) and people of working age (16-64) in the Borough is expected to decrease. The estimated number of people aged 85+ living in A&ND is estimated to more than double from 3,992 in 2018 to 6,648 by the end of the plan period in 2032 and 8,534 by 2043.

¹ Department of Health [online] Health survey Northern Ireland (found at <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/topics/doh-statistics-and-research/health-survey-northern-ireland> [accessed 12/10/2020])

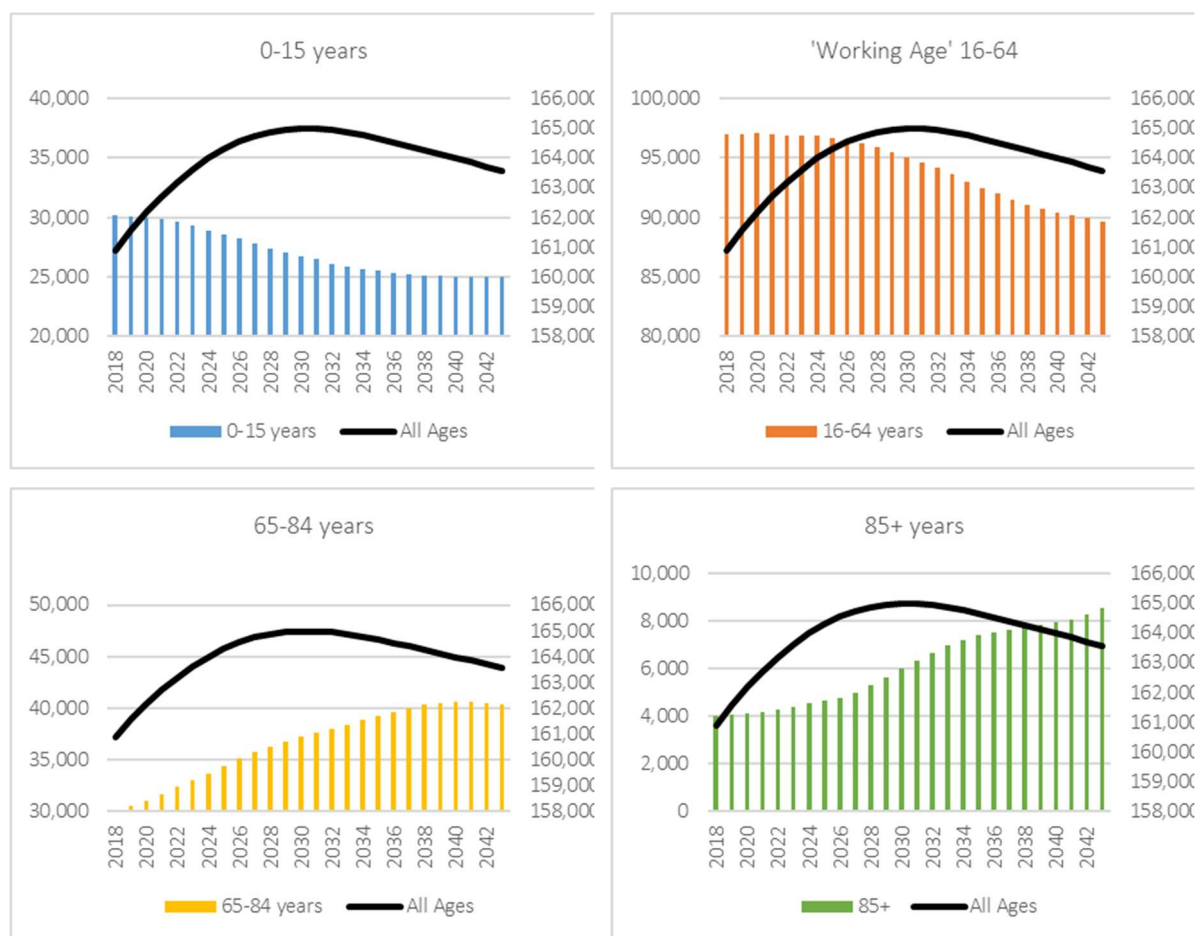
² Ards and North Down Borough Council's Local Development Plan - POP Position Paper Population Growth and Housing

³ NISRA (2020) - 2018-based Population Projections for Areas within Northern Ireland - All Areas - Population by age and sex (2018-2043)

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ NISRA (2020) 2019 Mid-year Population Estimates for Northern Ireland - All areas - Population totals (2001-2019: including historical NI 1821-2019)

Figure 5.1.1: 2018-based Population Projections for A&ND (selected age groups)



Source: NISRA (2020) 2018-based Population Projections for Areas within Northern Ireland Date published: 30 April 2020 All Areas - Population by age and sex (2018-2043)

In 2019 the estimated number of children under 16 in Ards and North Down (30,181) accounted for 18.66% of the population¹. This amount was slightly lower than the 2001 figure (30,512) and is the lowest of all Councils in NI², but children remain a significant proportion of the population.

The LDP can play a role in ensuring that adequate land is available for the provision of development that can meet the future health care needs of the increasing population and its vulnerable groups. The various needs of these groups such as adequate healthcare facilities, nursing homes, suitable housing, community centres and outdoor spaces, will 'need to be accommodated' and 'remain high on the agenda'³. Ensuring 'sustainable access' to community and recreational facilities for children will also be part of the LDP's role.

¹ NISRA (2020) All areas - Population by sex and age bands (2001-2019)

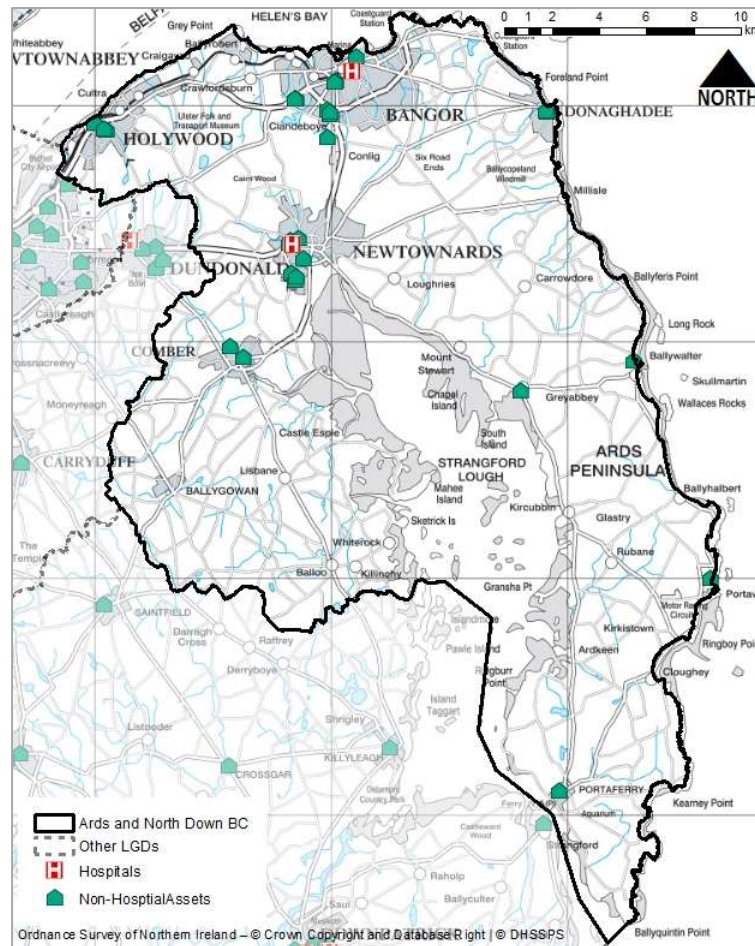
² NISRA (2020) 2019 Mid-year Population Estimates for Northern Ireland - All areas - (age_broad)

³Ards and North Down Borough Council's Local Development Plan - Position Paper Population Growth and Housing

South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

The SEHCT is responsible for the provision of community health and social care in the Borough.

Figure 5.1.2: Community Hospitals and Health Centres in Ards and North Down Borough Council



Source: Spatial NI [online] (accessed February 2018)

The nearest main hospital is the Ulster Hospital, which is the major acute hospital for the SEHCT. It is located outside of the Borough in Dundonald, but is relatively close to several settlements located in the north of the Borough. There are two community hospitals - Bangor Community Hospital and Ards Community Hospital, the locations of which are in Figure 5.1.2. Both provide health, social and primary care. There are also a number of health centres, the majority of which are also located in settlements in the north of the Borough¹.

Causes of Death

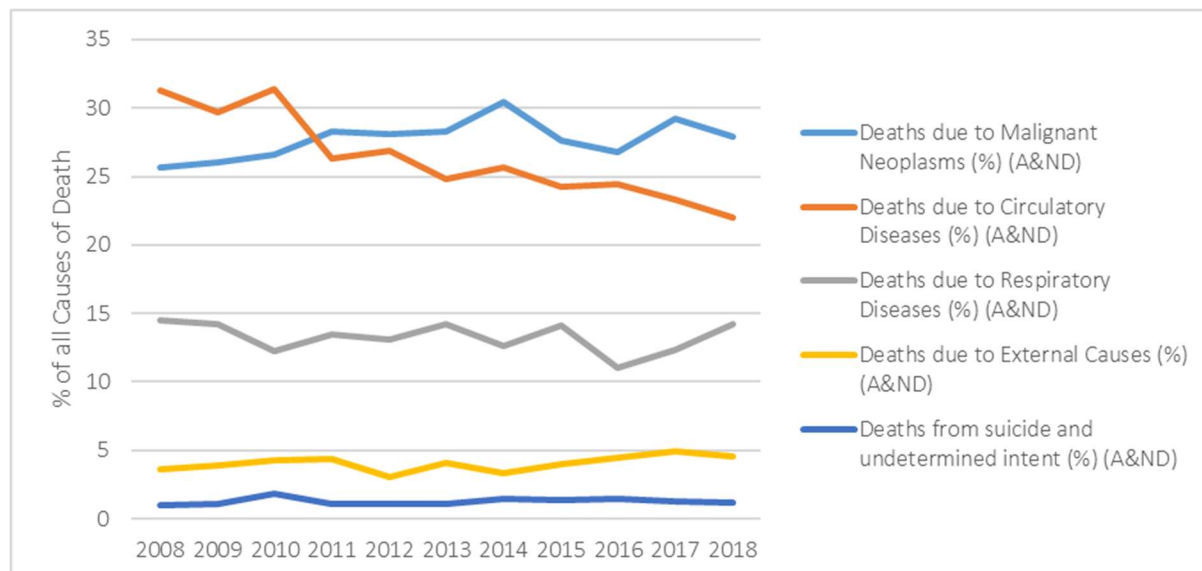
Across NI, cancer is the most common cause of death, accounting for approximately 1 in 4 deaths, with the most common cancer site the bronchus or lung. Circulatory diseases are the second most common cause, recorded as the cause of approximately 1 in 5 deaths. The Registrar General's annual report 2022 has noted a significant decrease (-63%) over the past 30 years in the proportion of deaths caused by ischaemic heart disease, however the proportion of deaths caused by dementia or Alzheimer's is increasing. Around 1 in 10 deaths are from respiratory diseases. In 2022, Covid-19 was recorded as the cause of around 1 in 25 deaths².

¹ <http://www.setrust.hscni.net/>

² NISRA (2023) Registrar General Northern Ireland Annual Report 2022

In Ards and North Down, the three main causes of death are cancers, circulatory diseases and respiratory diseases. NISRA data shown in the figure below suggest that the proportion of deaths attributed to circulatory disease in the Borough is decreasing and the proportion of deaths from cancers is increasing.

Figure 5.1.3: NISRA main categories for Cause of Death in Ards and North Down 2008-2018



Source: NISRA NINIS (2018) Deaths by Cause (administrative geographies) 1999-2018

Relative to other Council areas, Ards and North Down has the third highest number of cancer, respiratory, mental/behavioural and nervous system related deaths; and the second highest number of circulatory related deaths.

External causes of death (for example accidents and suicide) are the leading cause of death in NI for people aged under 34¹. These factors account for between two thirds and three quarters of deaths in this age group annually. Road fatalities in Ards and North Down have ranged between 3 and 7 people annually in the years 2014-2022 (NI: 50-79), with 45-65 accidents in the Borough each year resulting in serious injuries (see table below). The Road Safety Strategy has set a target of a 55% reduction in the number of children killed or seriously injured on Northern Ireland's roads, from the 2004 – 2008 average of 128 to fewer than 58 by 2020. With the exception of 2020, when restrictions on travel were in place, this target has not been achieved².

	2014		2015		2016		2017		2018		2019		2020		2021		2022	
	AND	NI	AND	NI	AND	NI	AND	NI	AND	NI	AND	NI	AND	NI	AND	NI	AND	NI
Killed	4	79	5	74	7	68	4	63	6	55	4	56	5	56	7	50	3	55
Seriously injured	52	789	45	711	51	828	61	778	51	730	57	774	37	596	57	809	65	910

Source: PSNI [online]: Police Recorded Injury Road Traffic Collisions and Casualties Northern Ireland - Detailed Trends Report 2022

Obesity

In the HSNi 2018/2019, in the adult population, 62% of adults were either overweight (37%) or obese (25%) - similar to 2017-18³. In 2005, data from the NINIS reported that 35% of the NI population was overweight and 24% was obese⁴. This indicates that there has been an increase in the proportion of people suffering from weight issues. The HSNi data for the

¹ NISRA: Registrar General Annual Reports, 2015-2022 'Cause of Death'.

² PSNI (2020) Police Recorded Injury Road Traffic Collisions and Casualties Northern Ireland 2019 Key Statistics Report

³ Department of Health: Health survey Northern Ireland: first results 2018/19

⁴ NINIS: Adult Obesity – Health and Social Well-being Survey

SEHCT shows a slight increase in the number of obese people from 25% in 2010/11 to 26% in 2018/19. It is a similar trend for overweight people.

Weight has been linked to some cancers including breast and bowel, so there is a direct link between weight and the largest cause of death in the Borough. Men tend to be more overweight or obese than women.

The HSNi 2018/19 also reported that 19% of children (2 years to 15 years) in NI were classed as overweight and 8% as obese, a similar proportion to the previous years back to 2010/11. While NINIS data from 2010-12 to 2016-19 show that, relative to other LGDs, the Council had one of the lowest average rate of primary one and year 8 children with a BMI in the obese range¹, around one in five children in the Borough is overweight or obese. However, amongst the most deprived SOAs in Ards and North Down, childhood obesity exceeds the NI average.

The Community Plan's 3rd Statement of Progress (3rd SOP) has noted that there is a strong link between obesity and areas of higher deprivation (poverty). In 2023, the Public Health Agency (PHA) selected Ards and North Down as the first area to become an early adopter site to introduce a 'Whole Systems Approach to Obesity'. The next steps of this project will be to better understand the links between areas of higher deprivation and obesity.

Mental Health

In NI, mental health is a serious concern, with one in four people likely to experience a mental health issue at some point in their lives². Significant numbers of young people have reported feeling stressed, anxious or hopeless³. At the same time, there has been an increasing trend for the prescription of anti-depressants⁴. In the HSNi 2017/2018, 18% of respondents indicated having a mental health issue whilst a fifth of people reported suffering from anxiety. The Community Plan 3rd SOP identifies mental health, social isolation and poverty as the initial focus for re-establishing formal community planning structures following the Covid-19 pandemic.

Physical Health

In the Census 2011, 81% of people from the Borough were recorded as having very good or good health, 15% with fair health, and 5% with bad or very bad health. The 'Census, North Down and Ards as 100 People' reported that, of people with long-term health problems, 80% were not limited in their daily activities but 9% were limited a little, and 11% were limited a lot.

In the HSNi 2018/2019, nearly three quarters (72%) of respondents in NI reported 'very good' or 'good health'. This proportion has shown a relatively stable trend since 2010/11. In the SEHCT, very good or good health was reported by 74% in 2018/2019. This figure is showing a generally stable trend but has ranged between 71% and 77% since 2010/2011.

The HSNi 2018/19 also reported that 40% of people are living with a long-term illness (physical or mental) lasting 12 months or more. This figure has been relatively stable since 2015/16, having previously shown an increasing trend from 36% in 2011/12. In the SEHCT, 38% identified themselves as having a long-standing illness in 2018/19. This figure has remained relatively stable since 2010/11.

In 2016, it was reported that the three most common conditions of people admitted to hospital were high blood pressure, obesity and asthma⁵. All of these conditions could be in some way alleviated through increased physical activity. In general, figures for the Borough

¹ NISRA Childhood BMI (administrative geographies) 2010/12 - 2016/19

² SEHCT Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing [online] (found at <http://www.setrust.hscni.net/healthyliving/2411.htm>)

³ Belfast Telegraph [online] Almost half of Northern Ireland young people have mental health problems, study reveals (April 2018) (found at <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/almost-half-of-northern-ireland-young-people-have-mental-health-problems-study-reveals-36776120.html> accessed [12.10.2020])

⁴ Statistical Baseline for The Big Plan for Ards and North Down July 2017 - 1st Issue

⁵ Ards and North Down Borough Council's baseline for The Big Plan

Council show that it performs better than the overall NI population on all 26 health indicators used for measuring population health¹.

Well-being

In the HSNi 2018/2019, 88% of respondents were very satisfied or satisfied with life but 4% felt to some extent dissatisfied. This was similar to figures reported in previous years. A fifth of people reported loneliness, with people living in urban areas more affected than those living in rural areas.

Since 2013 personal well-being across the UK's four nations has been measured in an Annual Population Survey². Throughout the survey period, people in NI have given better average ratings for life satisfaction, feelings that things done in life are worthwhile and happiness than people in England, Scotland or Wales. The long-term record 2012-18 has also recorded anxiety levels being lower in NI than elsewhere in the UK. However, since the year ending March 2018 there has been a reversal in the generally downward trend in anxiety in NI, with anxiety increasing markedly between 2018 and 2019³. Over this period there was an 11.9% increase in anxiety ratings in NI, from 2.53 to 2.83 (out of 10). A fifth of people reported high levels of anxiety in the HSNi 2018/2019.

People's physical health and well-being can be improved by spending time outdoors with access 'to good quality landscapes' and use of good quality green space⁴. In Ards and North Down, around three quarters of residents enjoy leisure time outdoors at least once a week⁵ and residents have the highest life satisfaction in NI⁶. However, in the years 2015 - 2017 up to one fifth of residents in the Borough reported that they never spend leisure time outdoors⁷. Providing outdoor recreational facilities, green and open space can help encourage people into the outdoors. The RDS recognises and promotes the health benefits of green/blue infrastructure including community greenways. This is partially why greenways are being encouraged at the strategic level, to help increase the number of people walking and cycling⁸. More information on greenways is in the Transport and Accessibility section of this report; and on the natural environment in the Natural Resources section.

The LDP POP Position Paper on Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation (para 5.23) notes that, broadly speaking, the legacy North Down Borough Council area, had a 65.93ha deficit of outdoor sports area and a 45.10ha deficit of children's play space.

Physical activity

It is recommended by the Department of Health, that people aged 19 and over should try to be active on a daily basis and have 150 minutes of moderate activity, or 75 minutes of vigorous activity a week.

In the HSNi 2016/17, 55% of the respondents met the recommendations. Although a slight increase on previous years, 26% remained inactive. In the SEHCT, in 2016/17, 60% of people were meeting the physical activity guidelines. This showed an increase on previous years and remained the best performing of all the Trusts⁹ but some people remain inactive. Men tend to be more active than women.

The Department for Health recommends that adults should undertake physical activity that involves all the major muscle groups at least twice a week. In 2016/17, 25% of respondents to the HSNi met the recommendations but 60% had no muscle building activity. In the

¹ Statistical Baseline for The Big Plan for Ards and North Down July 2017 - 1st Issue

² Office for National Statistics: Personal well-being in the UK

³ Office for National Statistics (2019) Personal well-being in the UK: April 2018 to March 2019 (Date published 23 October 2019)

⁴ Ards and North Down Borough Council's Local Development Plan – POP Position Paper Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation

⁵ NINIS Leisure Time Outdoors (administrative geographies) 2015-2017

⁶ NINIS Satisfaction with life - Health Survey (administrative geographies) 2017

⁷ NINIS Leisure Time Outdoors (administrative geographies) 2015-2017

⁸ Ards and North Down Borough Council's Local Development Plan - POP Position Paper Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation

⁹ NINIS: Physical Activity – Health Survey

SEHCT, in 2016/17, 27% of respondents were classed as meeting the recommendations, an improvement on previous years but no muscle strengthening remains an issue for the majority. Men tend to perform better than women.

ARK (Access Research Knowledge - a joint initiative between Queens University and the University of Ulster) carries out an annual survey of P7-aged children and 16 year olds in NI. Commencing in 2015, ARK has been commissioned by Sport NI to include questions on sport and physical activity in the surveys, to provide a baseline and allow policy progress to be measured^{1,2}.

The surveys found that around half (49%) of P7 children and four out of ten 42% 16 year olds reported that they walked or cycled to and from school. However only a third (32%) of P7 children and less than one in ten (8%) 16-year olds met the United Kingdom (UK) guideline target of a minimum 60 minutes of physical activity per day. Large proportions of children are therefore not engaging regularly in physical activity. One in ten children felt they could not play freely with their friends in their community and children reported being able to play more freely with friends in school (84%), compared with being able to play with friends when in their communities or homes (77%). Children reported feeling safer when playing in school (89%), compared with feeling safe when playing in their communities or homes (73%). This reflects the findings of several UK studies³ which found, among other things, that a fifth of children did not play outside at all on an average day and less than one in ten children regularly played in wild spaces compared to half of children a generation ago.

Disability

People can have disabilities or health problems because of a variety of reasons. Some people may be born with a disability whilst others may develop one after an accident, as they naturally age or due to health related issues. In some cases, people's daily lives can be greatly affected and limited⁴. The HSNi has found that since 2010, between a quarter and a third of respondents reported each year that they had an illness that affected their ability to carry out day-to-day activities. In the years 2014-2017 between 12,850 and 14,010 people or 8.1 - 8.8% of the Borough's population claimed disability living allowance⁵. Personal Independence Payment (PIP) replaced Disability Living Allowance for claimants of working age on 20th June 2016. People with disabilities may be less able to participate in physical activity and may find it more difficult to access the outdoors. According to Disability Sport NI, 'people with a disability are less than half as likely to participate in sport as non-disabled people'⁶. Enabling physical activity for less able people through provision of accessible and adequate sports facilities, as well as the outdoors, should be a consideration of the LDP.

Providing Care

The LDP position paper on Population Growth and Housing, reported that in 2011, 13% of the population of the Borough were 'informal carers'. The paper also reported how, 'large areas', of the Borough, 'have higher proportions of people providing unpaid care.' A NINIS survey conducted over the years 2010-2016, reported that 12% of people in the SEHCT had caring responsibilities. In the SEHCT 14% of respondents had full-time caring responsibilities. This is a slight increase on most previous years since 2010/11. The HSNi 2017/18 reported a similar proportion of people (13%) with caring responsibilities. It was also reported that nearly three-quarters of carers receive no money and over half have their own

¹ Schubotz, D., Lloyd, K. & McKnight, M. (2016) 'A Question of Sport - Perspectives of Children and Young People' ARK Research Update 107.

² McQuade, L., Kehoe, S. & Emerson, L. (2015) 'Are children getting the opportunities to realise their right to play?' ARK Research Update 98

³ The Guardian, 25th March 2016 'Three-quarters of UK children spend less time outdoors than prison inmates – survey' (accessed 28.11.17)

⁴ Ards and North Down Borough Council's Local Development Plan - POP Position Paper Population Growth and Housing

⁵ Ards and North Down Borough Council Statistical Baseline for The Big Plan July 2017 – 1st Issue

⁶ Disability Sport NI website – About Us – What We Do January 2019

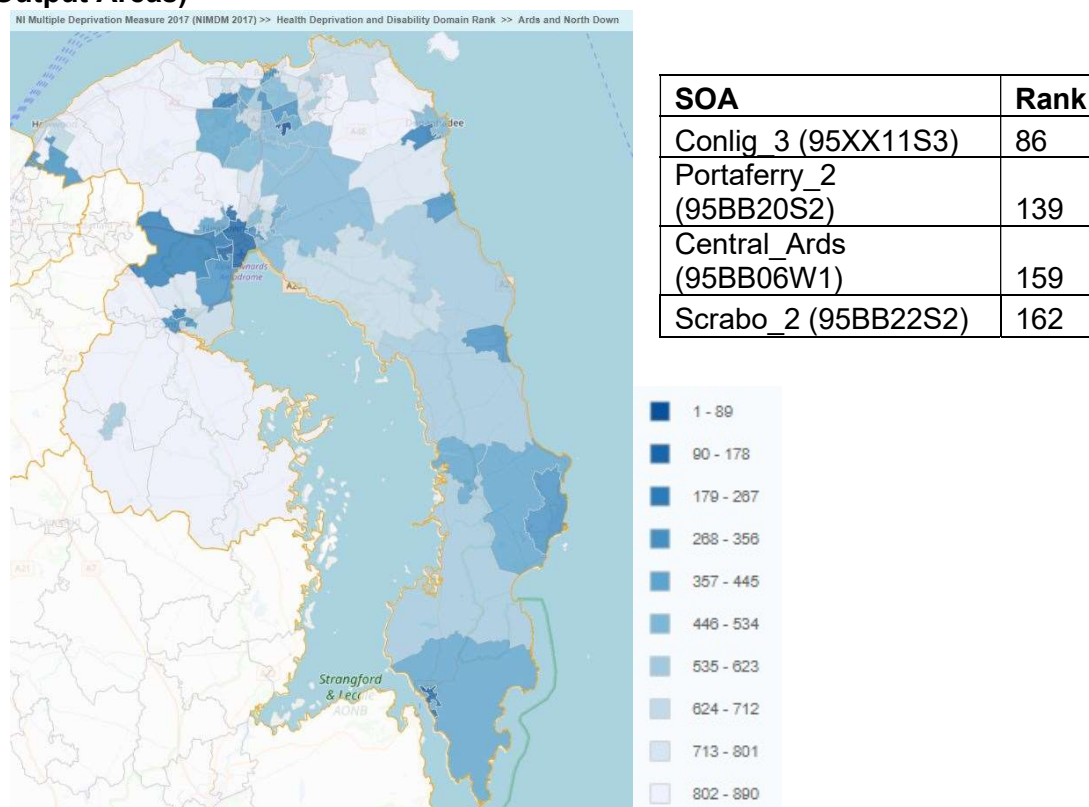
health issues because of their role. The Census 2021 recorded 13% of residents as being providers of unpaid care¹.

There is a role for the LDP to ensure that the needs of carers can be met. This may mean improving local access to appropriate facilities and services, enabling adaptations to housing and enabling live-in carers.

Health Inequalities

Inequalities in health are differences that occur within a population as a direct result of social circumstance. There are many social causes to health inequalities that may include where someone is born, lives or works. *Health and Disability* is a measure toward the NI Multiple Deprivation Measures 2017². Those Super Output Areas (SOAs) which are in the 20% most deprived areas (ranked 1-178) in terms of health and disability are shown to the right side of Figure 5.1.4. In terms of this measure, the top ten most deprived areas in the Borough are ranked within 30% of the most deprived areas in NI. Conlig 3 is the most deprived area for this measure in the Borough which is in the top 100 of a total of 890 possible areas in NI. Of the 88 least deprived SOAs (ranks 802-890) across NI, 21 (24%) are in Ards and North Down.

Figure 5.1.4: NIMDM 2017 Health Deprivation and Disability Domain Rank (Super Output Areas)



Source: NISRA -NI Multiple Deprivation Measures 2017 SOA Results Interactive Maps

Noise

The Environmental Noise Directive requires Member States to 'preserve environmental noise quality where it is good', through the identification and protection of designated Quiet Areas within urban areas with more than 100,000 inhabitants.

Under the Environmental Noise Regulations (NI) 2006, Round 3 noise maps have been produced based on 2016 data for the following:³

¹ NISRA Census 2021 DT-0011 Provision of Unpaid Care by Age (19 Categories) by Sex

² NISRA website – Deprivation

³ DAERA Round 3 Noise Maps and Noise Mapping Technical Reports (Date published: 26 January 2018)

- major roads – (more than 3 million vehicle passages per year)
- major railways – (railways with more than 30,000 train passages per year)
- major airports – (airports with more than 50,000 movements per year)
- agglomerations – (urban areas with more than 100,000 inhabitants)

Noise maps of relevance to Ards and North Down include those published for Belfast City Airport, industrial sites, major roads and major railways, all of which are evident in the north of the Borough. The settlements of Bangor, Crawfordsburn, Groomsport, Helen's Bay, Holywood and Seahill are included within the 'Belfast agglomeration'. The most affected areas from related noise appear to be along the north coast, in the Bangor area, and in and around Newtownards¹.

DAERA has developed its own approach to the identification and designation of Quiet Areas in policy guidance and in connection with the city of Belfast. One Quiet Area has been designated in the Borough, at Conor Park / Stricklands, Glen Bangor West.

Radon

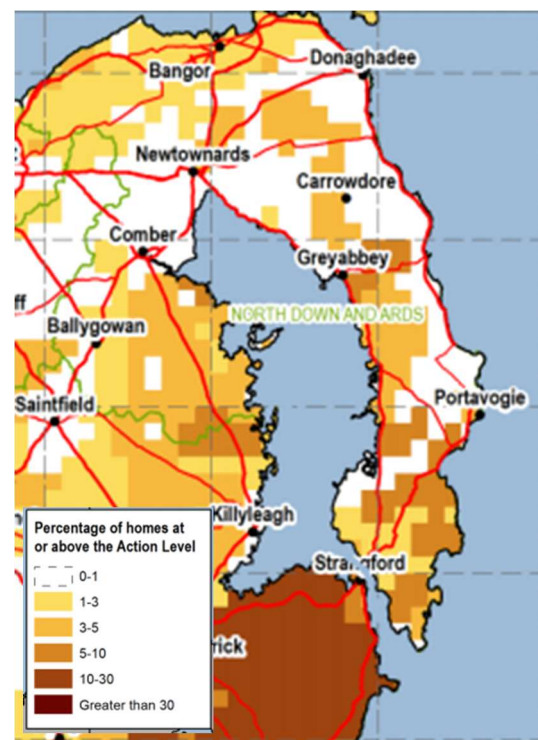
Radon is a natural radioactive gas that occurs at low levels outside but which can become concentrated in enclosed places, such as houses, workplaces and other buildings. Long-term exposure to radon increases the risk of lung cancer, particularly in smokers or ex-smokers. After smoking, radon exposure is the second greatest cause of lung cancer. It is estimated to cause 30 deaths per year in NI².

Public Health England (in conjunction with the GSNI) published a new indicative atlas of Radon levels in homes throughout Northern Ireland in 2015. It estimates that some 155,000 homes, about 1 in 5 in Northern Ireland, are now in 'Affected Areas'³.

An extract from this atlas is shown in Figure 5.1.5. The darker colours on the radon map indicate a greater probability of high radon levels in a building. The government has recommended that householders take action to reduce their radon levels where they exceed the 'action level' of 200 Becquerels per cubic metre.

The atlas helps to inform where measurement of Radon levels may be required at dwellings, and if necessary, where action may be required to protect homes. It can be seen in Figure 5.1.5 that there are no areas in Ards and North Down with a 10% or greater probability of exceeding the recommended action level for Radon, however areas surrounding Portavogie and Greyabbey have a 5-10% probability.

Figure 5.1.5: Extract from 'Radon in Northern Ireland: Indicative Atlas'



Source: Radon in NI: Indicative Atlas August 2015
© Crown copyright and British Geological Survey © NERC 2015

5.1.3 Likely Evolution of the Baseline without the Local Development Plan

In the absence of a new LDP, the Regional Development Strategy (RDS), the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) and relevant planning policy statements (PPSs), would still be applied. However, the most up to date spatial information would not be available and

¹ DAERA: Noise Mapping and Action Planning Contract Round 3 – 2016/17 Summary Report – Final January 2018

² NI Direct Radon Gas in your Home (found at <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/radon-gas-your-home>)

³ Gov.uk "New Radon Map for Northern Ireland Published" (found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-radon-map-for-northern-ireland-published>)

there could be a much higher risk of missing opportunities to provide adequate and accessible healthcare facilities and services in the most appropriate locations. It could become increasingly difficult to sustainably integrate measures like greenways, cycle routes, open space, sports facilities and play parks, even with their multiple benefits for health, wellbeing, nature and communities. Likewise, improving any existing inequalities in healthcare provision and any adverse trends relevant to health and wellbeing may be less feasible.

5.1.4 Key Sustainability Issues for Health and Well-being

- The population of the Borough is increasing, but the projected rate of increase in Ards and North Down is significantly lower than the rate projected for NI as a whole. Current projections show a declining population from 2032.
- Population trends indicate an ageing population in the Borough. There will be an increasing need to create accessible means for older people to engage in physical activity to prolong their healthy lives.
- Up to a fifth of people in the Borough never spend leisure time outdoors. However, a greater proportion than the NI average enjoys leisure time outdoors at least once a week.
- Participation rates in physical activity are higher than the NI average, however they are significantly lower than recommended minimum levels.
- There is a need to promote and incentivise regular participation in physical activity and time outdoors through provision of and ensuring good accessibility to sports facilities, open space, play areas, green infrastructure and walking and cycling routes.
- The Borough has an accessible natural environment, particularly to the coast and sea, with numerous open spaces, walking and cycling trails. Baseline information, recorded for BMAP, however points to a deficit of open space, sport and outdoor recreation provision.
- Less than half of children in NI walk or cycle to school.
- There is a particular need for children to have accessible play in places where they feel safe.
- Development should be sited and designed to connect with public open space, walking and cycling routes and other recreational facilities where possible.
- Around one in five children and three in five adults in the Borough are either overweight or obese. Obesity in children has a higher incidence in the most deprived areas. Diet and a relatively inactive lifestyle are contributory factors.
- Mental health indicators on average are better than the NI average, but there is evidence of poorer mental health in the most deprived parts of the Borough.
- Noise and environmental quality are not identified as posing significant adverse effects at present, however they can impact on health and therefore environmental quality should be improved, or sustained where it is good, to minimise adverse health impacts.
- Conor Park/Stricklands Glen Bangor West is a designated 'Quiet Area', which should be considered in planning new development.
- Road safety for all users should be a key consideration of planning and design.
- The location of and access to emergency services can impact on response times. Rural areas require accessibility to general practice and non-emergency healthcare services.
- In general, when compared to the overall population of NI, measures of health are better in the Borough across most of the indicators used for measuring population health.

There are however inequalities in health and well-being, with most measures of health and life expectancy being significantly worse in the most deprived areas.

- Good spatial planning can reduce health inequalities by providing a high standard of design and place making, open space, capacity for any additional services required and accessibility.
- There is a need to plan the relative location of industry and housing, open space and public facilities to minimise use conflicts.
- There are small parts of the Borough such as the southern Ards Peninsula where there is a moderate probability of the incidence of Radon at actionable levels.

5.2 Community

5.2.1 Review of Policies, Plans, Programmes and Strategies

Community considers demographics, community identity, shared space, prosperity and social inclusion, crime and community safety, good relations and the rural population.

An understanding of changes in the makeup of the population informs future needs for the plan area for housing, employment, infrastructure, facilities and amenities. Models of the future population take account of other policies, net migration and, for example, health initiatives, which are likely to have an influence on births and deaths. A consistent requirement of policies related to the various demographic groups is the need to incorporate equality of treatment and opportunity.

Delivering Social Change, an NI Executive Programme, seeks to reduce inequalities, often through targeted approaches and the PfG makes commitments to support communities, address inequalities and ensure that people feel safe.

includes an outcome that *'We have an equal and inclusive society where everyone is valued and treated with respect'* which includes measures to promote inclusion, reduce poverty, and promote and provide access to public services.

The Regional Strategic Objectives of the SPPS include *'sustain a vibrant rural community by supporting rural economic development of an appropriate nature and scale'*. The draft Marine Plan also includes the objective to *'promote the development of vibrant, accessible and sustainable coastal communities'*. Regional policy seeks to enable people to live and work in rural communities with reasonable provision of facilities while retaining the intrinsic character and value of our countryside and small communities. This echoes the Rural White Paper Action Plan, which also refers to improved infrastructure, transport and key services; strong community infrastructure which can avail of economic, social and cultural opportunities; and better linkages between rural and urban areas.

There is growing recognition of the need for provision to take account of the varying needs of different age groups. The World Health Organisation promotes *"an age-friendly world is a place that enables people of all ages to actively participate in community activities. It is a place that treats everyone with respect, regardless of their age. It is a place that makes it easy to stay connected to those around you and those you love. It is a place that helps people stay healthy and active even at the oldest ages. It is a place that helps those who can no longer look after themselves to live with dignity and enjoyment."* These aspirations are also reflected in the objectives of the Northern Ireland Children and Young People's Strategy 2020-30 and the Active Ageing Strategy 2016-2022.

*'Together: Building a United Community'*¹ is another Executive programme. It has a vision for *'a united community, based on equality of opportunity, the desirability of good relations and reconciliation - one which is strengthened by its diversity, where cultural expression is celebrated and embraced and where everyone can live, learn, work and socialise together, free from prejudice, hate and intolerance'*.²

As part of this Strategy, this Council has developed a Good Relations programme³ which promotes respect, equality and tolerance between different people who live in the same place.

The *'Community Safety Action Plan'*⁴ includes the action for Councils *'to support a sense of pride and ownership within neighbourhoods, deter anti-social behaviour and to address*

¹ Together: Building a United Community Strategy (Date published: 23 May 2013) <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/publications/together-building-united-community-strategy>

² The Executive Office: Together: Building a United Community Strategy

³ Ards and North Down: Good Relations (found at <https://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/resident/community/good-relations>) <http://www.newrymournedown.org/good-relations-programme>

⁴ Department of Justice Community Safety action plan 2015 to 2017 (date published 16 June 2015)

growing amenity problems associated with dilapidated or unsightly buildings and neglected sites'. The Council has also prepared an Age Friendly Strategy and Action Plan 2019-2022 which includes issues such as outdoor spaces and buildings, transport, housing, social participation, respect and inclusion, civic participation, communication and information and community and health.

The Council's Corporate Plan 2024-2028 has the vision of 'A Sustainable Borough' and includes among its strategic outcomes "Safe, welcoming and inclusive communities that are flourishing" and the Social Priority – "Improving wellbeing through social inclusion and reduced inequality".

'Creating positive outcomes for everyone by empowering individuals and communities...' is central to The Big Plan's ambition up until 2032. Other key aspects of this ambition include reducing inequalities; promoting good relations and sustainability; and improving the quality of and access to all public services. One of The Big Plan's five outcomes is for *"all people ...to live in communities where they are respected, are safe and feel secure"*¹. Considering the needs and wellbeing of the people of the Borough will be fundamental to achieving these outcomes and the overall vision of the Community Plan.

5.2.2 Baseline information

A detailed baseline of information is presented in Ards and North Down Borough Council's Community Plan, *'The Big Plan 2017-2032'*. Data have also been sourced from statistical baseline reports used for the Community Plan including the Community Plan's 3rd Statement of Progress, as well as Local Development Plan POP Position Papers on Population Growth and Housing; Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation; and Settlement and Placemaking. Census data have been sourced from NISRA and from internal statistics reports prepared by the Council's data and evidence analyst. The Community topic overlaps with the Health and Well-being, Housing, Education and Skills, Economy and Employment, Transport and Accessibility, Natural Resources and Historic Environment and Cultural Heritage sections of this report.

Population Distribution

Approximately 72.6% of the population is urban-based, being located in the five main towns of Bangor, Comber, Donaghadee, Holywood and Newtownards. The remaining 27.4% of the population is split between the existing villages, small settlements and the open countryside, with the latter accounting for some 14.4% of the total population.

This urban proportion is higher than the NI average whilst the rural proportion is lower than the NI average². About 80% of the population live in the northern 25% of the Borough. This leaves 20% of the population living throughout the remaining rural area, with some individuals and communities potentially quite isolated³.

On Census day 2011, 7,942 households in Ards and North Down were one person households where the resident was aged 65+ years⁴. This has increased to 9,777 in the 2021 Census, (14% of all households)⁵.

Ethnicity, Identity, Language and Religion

The 2011 Census recorded 13% of the resident population of the Borough as 'belonging to or brought up in the Catholic religion' (NI: 45%) and 75% 'belonging to brought up in a 'Protestant and Other Christian (including Christian related)' religion' (NI: 48%). 1.1% were from 'other' religions (NI 0.9%) and 10.7% declared no religion (NI: 5.6%)⁶. In the 2021 Census, 11% of residents reported their religion as Catholic, 42% as Presbyterian or Church

¹ Ards and North Down's Strategic Community Planning Partnership: The Big Plan April 2017-2032

² NINIS: Urban Rural Composition 2009 – Ards and North Down Borough Council

³ The Big Plan Statistical Baseline July 2017 – 1st Issue

⁴ NINIS Age Friendly Profile for Ards and North Down Local Government District (LGD2014)

⁵ NISRA Census 2021 MS-A26: Household composition - households

⁶ NISRA Census 2011: Religion or Religion Brought Up In: KS212NI (administrative geographies)

of Ireland and 30% reported that they had 'no religion', higher than NI average of 17.4% and highest among all NI councils¹.

In respect of identity, in the 2011 Census, 72.37% indicated that they had a British national identity, 8.32% had an Irish national identity and 32.41% had a Northern Irish national identity (respondents could indicate more than one national identity). In 2021, these figures were 48% 'British only', 6% 'Irish only' and 22% 'Northern Irish only'.

In the 2011 census 1.46% of the resident population of the Borough were from an ethnic minority population (NI: 1.72%) and the remaining 98.54% were white (including Irish Traveller) (NI: 98.28)². 1.50% of the Borough's resident population reported that they did not have English as their first language³. In 2021 the resident population from an ethnic minority had increased to 2.3% and 2.1% have a main language other than English.

The 2011 Census recorded nearly half the population as married or in a civil partnership (48%) and 37% as single. The 2011 Census also found that 28% of households in Ards and North Down were single-person households⁴. The 2021 Census recorded 52% of residents as being married or in a civil partnership and 31% as single. 30% of households were single-person households⁵.

Shared space

There are 5 towns, 17 villages and 20 small settlements⁶ in Ards and North Down Borough. These places, in which people live, need to provide services and facilities but they also have their own unique character, which evolves over time and reflects local culture, politics, wealth, and so on. Shared space is an important aspect of where people live. Provision of it enables people from different backgrounds and generations to meet and benefit from the shared space and the social interaction. Shared space can include community and leisure centres, libraries and museums, as well as areas of open space such as civic squares, playing fields and grassland areas⁷. Some people also consider shopping centres as a shared space⁸.

The second outcome of the Community Plan aspires for residents to "*enjoy good health and well-being*". Provision of adequate and accessible shared space can help deliver this. It can also include or link to green infrastructure which may enable people to increase their physical activity, if walkways or cycle ways are included. More information on green infrastructure is in the Transport and Accessibility section.

Outcome 1 of 'The Big Plan' is all about people fulfilling their potential, including the less able and people with disabilities, who can be prioritised as an 'at risk' group⁹. In the Borough, there is a significant proportion of the population - 20% - which has a limiting long-term health problem or disability¹⁰. The Community Plan reported that, in 2016, 13,840 people in the Borough were claimants of Disability Living Allowance (DLA). DLA was replaced in 2017 by the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) for people of working age. In May 2020, 6.3% of under 16s and 10.5% of over 65s in the Borough were claimants of DLA¹¹. In addition, 7% of 16-64 year olds in the Borough were claimants of PIP¹².

¹ Ards and North Down Borough Council (2022) Census 2021 Ards and North Down Release 2 Phase 1 (internal statistics report)

² NINIS Census 2011: Ethnic Group: KS201NI (administrative geographies)

³ Census 2011 Population Statistics for Ards And North Down Local Government District (2014)

⁴ NISRA [online] Local Government District (2014) information for Ards And North Down, Census 2011 Population Statistics for Ards And North Down Local Government District

⁵ NISRA Census 2021 MS-A26: Household composition - households

⁶ Ards and North Down Borough Council's Local Development Plan POP Position Paper – Settlement and Placemaking

⁷ Local Development Plan POP Position Paper Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation

⁸ The Big Plan Statistical Baseline July 2017 – 1st Issue

⁹ Ards and North Down's Strategic Community Planning Partnership: The Big Plan April 2017 – 2032

¹⁰ The Big Plan Statistical Baseline July 2017 – 1st Issue

¹¹ DfC [online] Benefits Statistics Summary Publication (National Statistics) - May 2020 (found at <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/articles/benefits-statistics-summary> [accessed 12/10/2020])

¹² DfC (2020) Personal Independence Payment Statistics - May 2020 Date published: 26 August 2020

An ageing population is likely to bring with it a higher number of age-related disabilities. Older people can also be prioritised as 'at risk'. There is a need for the Council to ensure all groups of people can remain socially interactive and to reduce social isolation. Providing accessible shared space for all people, in spite of their physical ability, is one way to help achieve this. More information on the population's health is in the Health and Well-being section of this report.

Outdoor Shared Space - Community Facilities

Within the Borough, there is a variety of facilities available for people to use or visit that can be considered 'shared space' and that can help to maintain people's health and well-being through physical activity. Examples include playing pitches, outdoor gyms, allotments, community gardens and equipped play areas. Currently, a greater than average proportion of the Borough's residents enjoy leisure time outdoors at least once a week¹. The LDP POP Position Paper on Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation refers to over 30 public playing fields as well as a variety of available recreational activities such as bowling, fishing, horse-riding and golf. There are also five leisure/sports centres within the Borough – Bangor, Newtownards, Holywood, Comber and Portaferry – and over 50 parks. However, the LDP paper also highlights that the Borough has less playing field provision relative to other Councils. It also highlights that a lack of 'outdoor playing space, children's casual play areas, equipped playgrounds and amenity open space' has been indicated from the draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (BMAP) so there may be a lack of this provision in the North Down area of the Borough.

In the Young Life and Times Survey carried out by ARK on 16 year olds in 2015², 66% of respondents reported that they 'very often' or 'sometimes' socialise or play sport with people from a different religious community compared to only 55% doing so with people from a different ethnic background. In the same survey carried out in 2017³, the figures had decreased to 63% and increased to 59% respectively. Respondents attending integrated schools were more likely to socialise or play sport with people from a different ethnic background.

The fifth outcome of the Community Plan is for people to “...*feel pride from having access to a well-managed sustainable environment.*” Ensuring people have access to enjoy their rich natural and historic environment for its health benefits is part of this outcome. Appropriate measures to maintain and increase areas of accessible outdoor space for recreation and leisure would be supportive of it. Community Greenways in appropriate locations are an excellent example of achieving this outcome with multiple benefits for the natural environment as well people's health and well-being. More information on the three greenways in the Borough is in the Transport and Accessibility section of this report.

Placemaking

The LDP process provides an opportunity to shape shared space to maximise its value for people and 'to support positive placemaking'⁴. Also known as 'placemaking', urban design can be integrated with patterns of use that reflect community identities⁵. Public spaces can perform a function as well as benefitting people's physical health and mental well-being.

Crime, Safety and Deprivation

The third outcome of 'The Big Plan' is for people to feel respected, safe and secure in their communities. Since 2012/13, recorded crime offences have been on the increase⁶ of which the largest types have been theft (29%), violence without injury (22%) and criminal damage

¹ NINIS Leisure Time Outdoors (administrative geographies) 2015-2017

² Access Research Knowledge Research (ARK) Young Life and Times Survey 2015 (found at <https://www.ark.ac.uk/ylt/results/yltcccontact.html> [accessed 14/10/2020])

³ Access Research Knowledge Research (ARK) NI Young Life and Times survey 2017 (<https://www.ark.ac.uk/ylt/2017/index.html>)

⁴ Ards and North Down Borough Council's Local Development Plan POP Position Paper – Settlement and Placemaking

⁵ Ards and North Down Borough Council's Local Development Plan POP Position Paper – Settlement and Placemaking

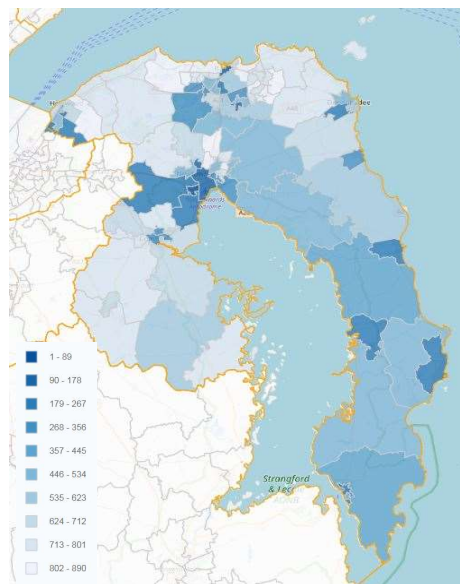
⁶ Ards and North Down's Strategic Community Planning Partnership: The Big Plan April 2017 – 2032

(21%)¹. There is one juvenile justice centre in the Borough and of all youth justice referrals in NI, 12% have been from the Ards and North Down Borough² - a significant amount. In the Borough, incidents of anti-social behaviour – nuisance, personal, environmental - are high, with over 5000 cases recorded annually³. As many as 29% of residents feel that the fear of crime affects their quality of life. This is in spite of the presence of the emergency services throughout the Borough.

There are links with deprivation and crime and poor health. People living in more deprived areas are more at risk of health issues, including substance abuse. Records show that in areas of higher deprivation people are twice as likely to need help for substance abuse⁴. There is also a three-year gap in life expectancy across the Borough⁵ which highlights health inequalities.

The Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM) 2017 scores areas in NI across several deprivation domains including income, employment, access to services, and crime. Scores range from one (most deprived) to 890 (least deprived). Spatially there is a wide range of scores across the Borough. Scrabo 2 in Newtownards scores the lowest at 71, whilst Broadway 2 in Bangor scores highest with, 868. Scrabo 2 also scores least for income (41), and employment (83); third lowest in terms of provision of education, skills and training (79); and the fourth most deprived for health and disability (162). In terms of crime and disorder, Scrabo 2 ranks 12th in the range (201), whilst Harbour 1 in Bangor is at the top for crime with a score of six. Overall, relative to other Council areas, Ards and North Down has only three areas ranked in the top 100 for multiple deprivation measures – Scrabo2 (71), Glen 1 (97) and Central Ards (99). The highest rankings for multiple deprivation are evident in and around the towns of Newtownards, Bangor and Donaghadee but also in the villages of Portaferry, Ballywalter and Portavogie as well as the rural areas associated with these places. Access to services is an issue across most of the Council area with the Ards Peninsula particularly affected as well as Killinchy 1, and Lisbane 1, located west of Strangford Lough ⁶.

Figure 5.2.1: Spatial profile of Ards and North Down Borough and measures of multiple deprivation.



Source: NISRA NI Multiple Deprivation Measures 2017

¹ The Big Plan Statistical Baseline July 2017 – 1st Issue

² The Big Plan Statistical Baseline July 2017 – 1st Issue

³ The Big Plan Statistical Baseline July 2017 – 1st Issue

⁴ The Big Plan Statistical Baseline July 2017 – 1st Issue

⁵ Ards and North Down's Strategic Community Planning Partnership: The Big Plan April 2017 – 2032

⁶ NISRA: NI Multiple Deprivation Measure 2017 (NIMDM2017)

5.2.3 Likely Evolution of the Baseline without the Local Development Plan

In the absence of a new plan, there may be the risk that policies and provision for development will not reflect the needs of the Borough area or support delivery of the Community Plan. A new plan would bring an opportunity to develop a plan-led system and to reflect the most recent strategies including the Community Plan. It could also provide an opportunity to address any deficits in the provision of shared space, community facilities and support systems within the Borough.

5.2.4 Key Sustainability Issues for Community

- 80% of our residents live in the northern 25% of the Borough and the remaining population is quite dispersed with a quarter of the population in rural areas. This can result in some individuals and communities experiencing rural isolation.
- Population trends indicate an ageing population in the Borough. Design should seek to be inclusive and meet the needs of all potential users.
- The community is less ethnically diverse than NI as a whole, however the needs of minority groups should be taken into account.
- There is a need to promote social inclusion through appropriate and accessible shared space and applying place making to make areas inclusive for all backgrounds, abilities and income levels.
- There is a commitment to promote social inclusion through quality shared and neutral space throughout the whole of the Borough where everyone feels welcome.
- There will continue to be a need for childcare facilities and facilities for older people, as well as access to community and leisure facilities.
- Fear of crime affects the quality of life of a significant proportion of residents. Planning has a role to play in future design and creating attractive, welcoming and safe places.
- Local representatives and groups can help to identify the needs and experience of different parts of our society which can be recognised through Community Planning. The LDP can help to deliver measures identified through Community Planning.
- Levels of deprivation vary widely across the Borough. Multiple issues of deprivation are present in many areas.

5.3 Housing

5.3.1 Review of Policies, Plans, Programmes and Strategies

Good quality sustainable housing is a fundamental need of society and can make a significant positive contribution to community cohesion and the character of our built environment. It is the role of the LDP to proactively facilitate land for the delivery of homes to meet the variety of future housing needs, together with the opportunities for people living there to make healthy lifestyle choices and benefit from community services and facilities.

Regional policy recognises the importance of housing in relation to sustainable development. It acknowledges the potential links between good quality, sustainable housing that enables access to jobs, facilities, services and infrastructure, and the benefits this can bring to wider society. Policy encourages housing near to public transport links and in residential areas with adequate facilities already in place. Consideration of local character and the environment, as well as attractive design, are also viewed as key elements for sustainable development. Good quality, sustainable housing supports wider society including the most disadvantaged, who can be supported through the access to high quality social housing.

Good quality housing is essential to safety and well-being. Availability of appropriate housing and access to community and social services influence the independence and quality of life of older people. Good quality housing developments promote well-being and health improvement through development design, which encourages walking and cycling, and use of open space for recreation. Fuel poverty can be tackled through housing design that aims for a low-carbon future, which also helps local air quality and our contributions to climate change mitigation.

Regional policy recognises that housing growth needs to be managed to achieve sustainable patterns of residential development. This can be achieved by promoting housing within existing hubs and clusters and by using vacant and underutilized land including brownfield sites. Regional policy encourages 60% of new housing to be in the hubs and clusters and to use brownfield sites. The needs of rural dwellers, those on low incomes, the vulnerable, the elderly, the disabled and the homeless should also be considered in housing policy.

The Ards and North Down Housing Investment Plan (HIP) 2023-26 has been produced by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. NIHE's strategic priorities include working with partners to increase social housing supply to help meet identified need and delivering innovative housing solutions for our customers to help reduce poverty and improve health & well being. The HIP also seeks to complement the objectives of the Council's Community Plan to deliver housing outcomes.

The Council's Corporate Plan 2024-2028 has the vision of 'A Sustainable Borough' and includes among its strategic outcomes "A vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors and "Safe, welcoming and inclusive communities that are flourishing".

The Council's Community Plan, '*The Big Plan*', aims to create 'positive outcomes for everyone' by working with individuals and communities. There are five outcomes of the Big Plan, and ensuring people have 'access to affordable housing' and 'are safe and feel secure in their homes' and communities, are just some aspects of these. The need to provide support for independent living of an ageing population is identified, as too the importance of accessible, good quality housing. The fifth outcome of the Community Plan also recommends mixed tenure and low-carbon homes, with 'access to the benefits of good mobile and broadband connectivity.'

5.3.2 Baseline Information

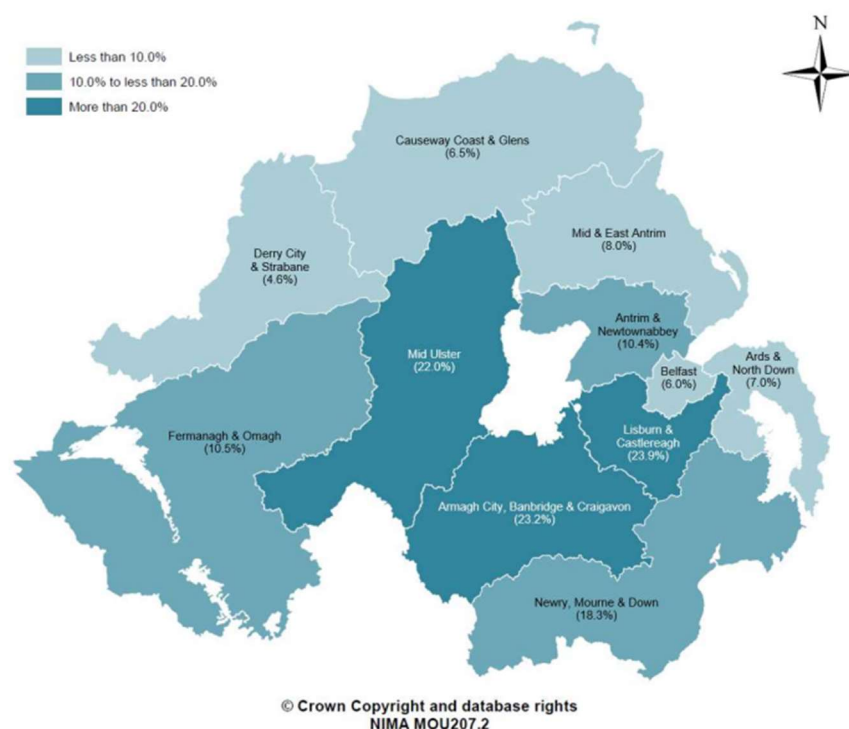
Relevant information is presented in the Council's Local Development Plan POP Position Paper on Population Growth and Housing. This topic also overlaps with the Health and Well-being and Community sections of this report.

Household Projections and Profile

Census data indicate that the number of households in Ards and North Down has risen from 64,605 in 2011 to 70,445 in 2021.

The 2016-based NISRA household projections estimated the number of households in 2020 as 67,075 and predicted this number to increase to 70,298 by the end of the plan period in 2032 and 70,522 in 2040¹. Household growth in the Borough is projected to be relatively lower compared to other parts of the region (Figure 5.3.1). Regionally, household sizes are decreasing with the average household size in NI expected to be 2.42 by 2037. Similar to regional household trends, the projected average household size within the Borough is expected to decrease from 2.39 persons in 2016 to 2.27 persons by 2040².

Figure 5.3.1: Projected household growth in Northern Ireland by LGD between 2016 and 2041



Source: NISRA (2018) Household projections (2016-based) bulletin charts

The proportion of the population over 65 living in Ards and North Down is higher than the NI average³. It has risen from 27,692 (17.7%) in 2011 to 36,226 (22.1%) in 2021⁴ and current projections indicate that the proportion of over 65s will increase during the plan period.

Housing Growth Indicators

Housing Growth Indicators (HGIs) provide an estimate of future housing need in Northern Ireland. The figures are based on current population/household formation trends and assume that these trends will continue into the future⁵.

The Housing Growth Figures based on 2012 projections predicted that new dwelling requirement for Ards and North Down would be 8,190 by 2030 and the projected annual yield required to meet new dwelling requirement was 546. DfI released updated 2016-based HGI figures on the 26th September 2019. The 2016-based HGI figure for A&ND for 2016-

¹ NISRA (2018) Northern Ireland Household Projections (2016 based) Date published: 06 December 2018

² NISRA (2018) Northern Ireland Household Projections (2016 based) Date published: 06 December 2018

³ NISRA (2018) Mid-Year Population Estimates Administrative areas (LGD 2014) 2001-2019

⁴ Ards and North Down Borough Council (2022) Census 2021 Ards and North Down Release 2 Phase 1

⁵ NISRA/ Land and Property Services, 2012 based Housing Growth Indicators (HGIs)

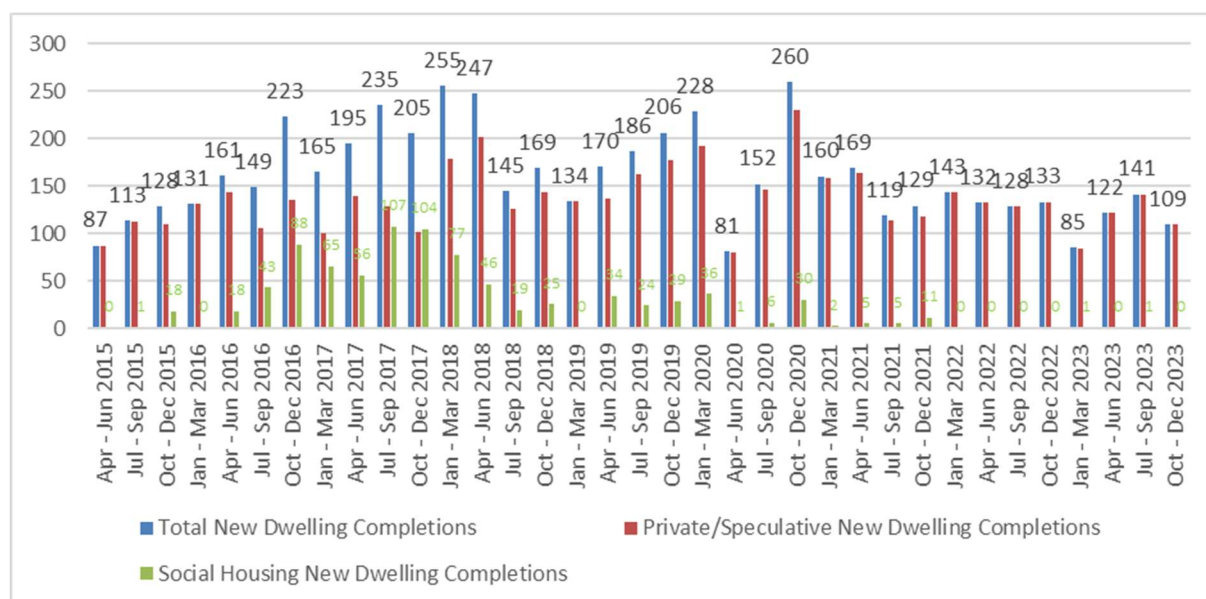
2030 is 5,500 dwellings; a reduction from the previous HGI calculation. This gives an average annual figure of 393 units. The pro rata figure up to 2032 is 6,286 units¹.

Dwelling Completion Rates

In 2012, the projected annual dwelling completion rate was approximately 496 dwellings per annum based on dwelling completion data over 2010-11 to 2014-15².

Completion rates are based on historical trend data and therefore reflect economic conditions at the time. The DoF's quarterly dwelling completion rates 2015-23 for the Borough which are shown in Figure 5.3.2 indicate an annual average of 658 new dwelling completions over the period 2016-2023, ranging from 457 completions in 2023 to 816 in 2018. All years since 2016 have exceeded DfI's 2016-based HGI annual figure.

Figure 5.3.2: New Dwelling Completions Ards and North Down (Q2 2015 - Q1 2018)



Source: Department of Finance, Northern Ireland New dwelling statistics Quarter 4 2023 Tables 2.3, 2.4 & 2.5 (published 14 Feb. 2024)

New dwelling development in Ards and North Down has been driven by the private sector, with 80% of new dwellings completed between Q2 2015 and Q4 2023 being constructed by this sector. Over the most recent three year period 2021-2023 there were a total of 25 dwellings completed within the social housing sector.

Housing Supply and Distribution

Existing Development Plans within Ards and North Down define the Settlement Strategy for the Borough. The draft BMAP provides the Settlement Strategy for North Down. The Ards and Down Area Plan 2015 (ADAP) is the adopted plan for Ards and its surroundings. Analysis of land for housing provision in 2017, showed that yields based on maximum gross density as set out in Key Design Considerations were often higher than yields identified in respective plans³.

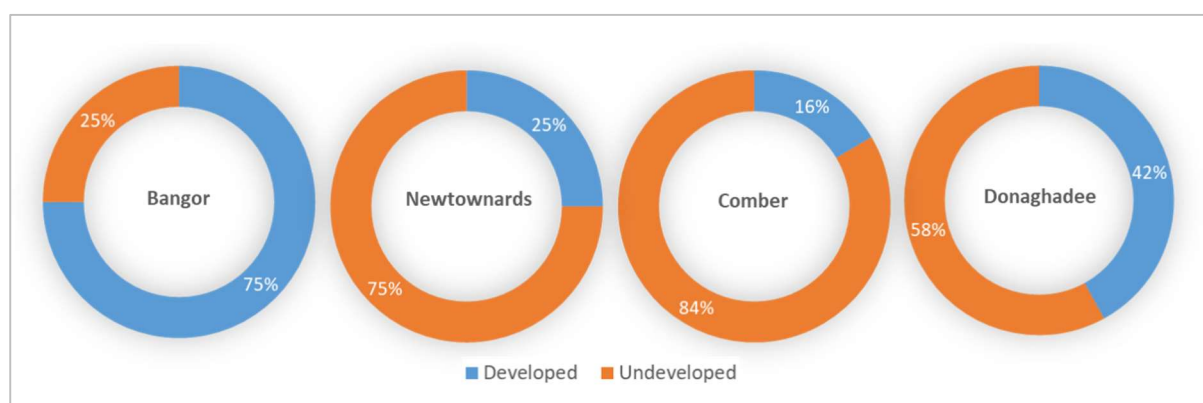
Both development plans favoured focusing development in hubs and main settlements. Figure 5.3.3 shows the percentage of land allocated for housing that has been developed within the Boroughs four main towns. Bangor was most developed in terms of land allocated for housing with three quarters of land being developed. The least developed of the main towns was Comber.

¹ NISRA (2019) 2016 based Housing Growth Indicators (HGIs) (Date published: 25 September 2019)

² NISRA/ Land and Property Services, 2012 based Housing Growth Indicators (HGIs)

³ Local Development Plan – POP Position Paper Population; Growth and Housing

Figure 5.3.3: Percentage of Developed Land Allocated Within Main Towns 2017



Source: Local Development Plan – Position Paper Population Growth and Housing

Analysis of land allocated for housing within existing development plans show that almost 80% of land allocated for housing within the draft BMAP was developed. Groomsport had the highest levels of development with 100% of land allocated being developed within it. Land allocated within Crawfordsburn was 60% developed; which was the least developed of all the settlements, within the draft BMAP¹.

Land allocated for housing within the ADAP showed a mixed picture in terms of overall development. Ballywalter was the most developed with 100% of land allocated being developed. Kircubbin was the second highest location for development with 80% of land allocated being developed whilst Balloo and Greyabbey showed zero development of land allocated².

Development trends show a decrease in the number of houses being built in rural areas and increase in the number of houses being built in urban settlements. Over the period 2013-2017, the number of houses built within urban areas had increased over the previous period 2008-2012 whilst the number of houses built in rural areas had decreased³.

Affordable Housing

The SPPS states that ‘affordable housing’ relates to social rented housing and intermediate housing.’ The Housing Executive currently defines affordable housing as ‘social rented housing and intermediate housing for eligible households.’ Increasing the supply of affordable housing and assisting in home ownership is essential to the long term objectives of the Ards and North Down Housing Investment Plan.

Demand for affordable housing is prevalent in both Ards and North Down as indicated by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) waiting lists. The NIHE’s current HIP 2023-26 indicates that in March 2023 there were 3,257 applicants on the waiting list, with 2,267 of these in housing stress. Approx. 15% (502) of applicants on the waiting list were in rural areas. Single people account for 40% of waiting list applicants, with older people (25%) and small families (20%) also in greatest housing need⁴.

The NIHE’s five-year assessment for social housing need by settlement 2022-27 identifies a need for 1,152 additional social housing units in the Borough. Housing need is highest in Newtownards Urban (211), Bangor Urban (371), Holywood (179) and Comber (172).

Ensuring there is land available to supply housing in areas of need has become more difficult, with NIHE reporting that in recent years areas of housing need have emerged in areas where NIHE does not own land. Groomsport, Crawfordsburn and Helens Bay have

¹ Local Development Plan – POP Position Paper Population; Growth and Housing

² Local Development Plan – POP Position Paper Population; Growth and Housing

³ Local Development Plan – POP Position Paper Population Growth and Housing

⁴ NI Housing Executive (2023) Housing Investment Plan 2023-2026

been identified as areas where there is difficulty meeting demand due to lack of land availability¹.

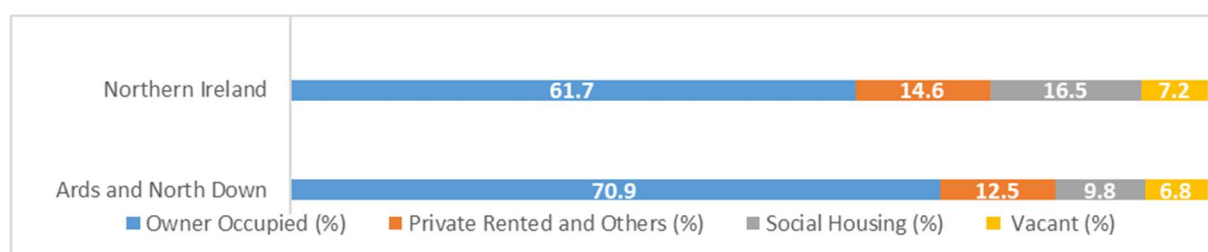
The NIHE's HIP 20123-26 also indicates that house and land prices, land availability and rates of development may make the first steps into owner occupation more difficult for many young rural households within the Borough. The HIP indicates that of the 480 housing allocations made to applicants in 2023, 64 (13%) were rural.

Tenure and Housing Type

In the 2011 Census

Owner occupation accounted for 66% of housing tenure in the 2021 Census, an increase from 62% in the previous Census². In Ards and North Down, approximately 71% of all housing stock was owner-occupied in both the 2011 and 2021 Census, indicating that a higher proportion of residents in the Borough own their own homes compared to the NI average³. The 2021 Census also found that 80% of residents in the Borough aged over 65 were owner-occupiers⁴.

Figure 5.3.4: Ards and North Down Dwelling Tenure 2011



Source: NISRA

Trends between 2006 and 2011 show a decline in owner occupation in Northern Ireland whilst in 2013/14 figures from the continuous Household Survey show continued growth in the private rented sector⁵. In the 2021 Census, 12.6% of households in the Borough reported that they live in NIHE or social rented housing and 13.4% rented privately.

Whilst owner occupation accounts for the largest proportion of dwelling tenure in Ards and North Down the private rented sector plays a key role in meeting housing needs of younger households and those priced out of the housing market. Demand for affordable housing also contributes to demand in the private rented sector where demand for affordable housing outstrips supply⁶.

In 2009, 39% of dwellings in Ards and North Down were detached, although household trends within the Borough show that the number of people living in flats and apartments doubled between 2001 and 2011. Data from the recent 2021 Census⁷ indicate that 38% of households live in a detached dwelling, 52% live in a semi-detached or terraced house and 10% live in a flat, maisonette or apartment. The trend towards smaller accommodation units is likely to continue with the projections of increasing numbers of one or two person households.

Affordability

Housing affordability is determined by price, average incomes and access to borrowing⁸. As stated in Section 5.5.2, the median gross annual salary for those living in the Borough in 2023 was £25,626, and below the NI average.

¹ Ards and North Down Housing Investment Plan Annual Update 2017

² NISRA Census 2021 Housing and Accommodation - Tenure - households MS-E15

³ NISRA, Dwelling Tenure (administrative geographies) 2011

⁴ NISRA Census 2021 MS-E19 Tenure where Household Reference Person (HRP) aged 66 and over

⁵ Northern Ireland Housing Market Review & Perspectives 2015-2018

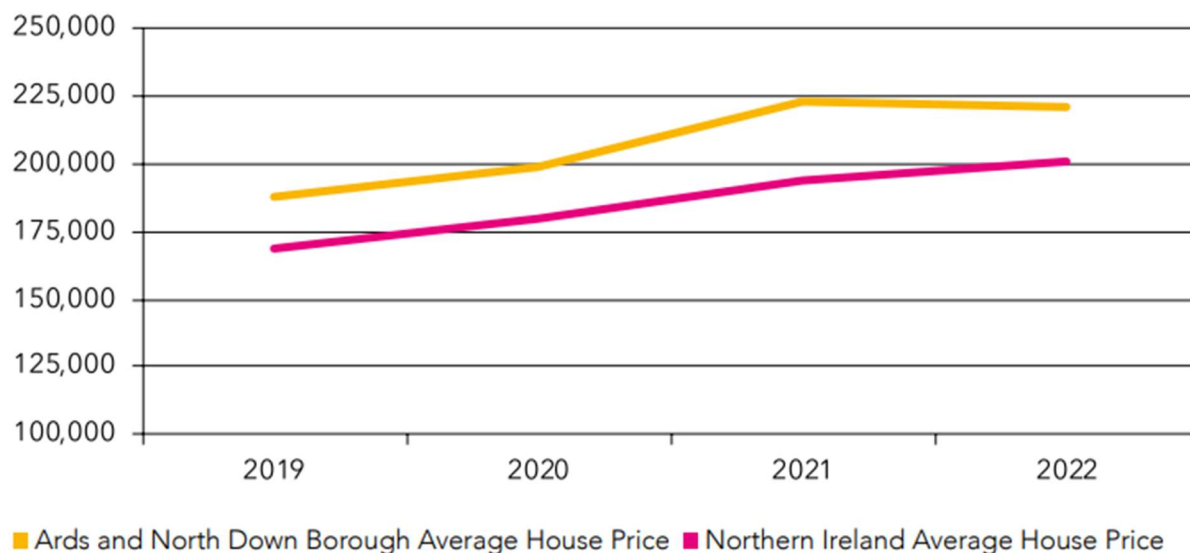
⁶ Ards and North Down Housing Investment Plan Annual Update 2017

⁷ NISRA Census 2021 MS-E06: Accommodation type - households

⁸ Local Development Plan – POP Position Paper Population Growth and Housing

The NIHE HIP 2023-26 includes figures from the Ulster University House price index. These indicate that the average house price in Ards and North Down Borough Council in 2022 was £220,922 and average annual house prices in the Borough are consistently above the NI average ().

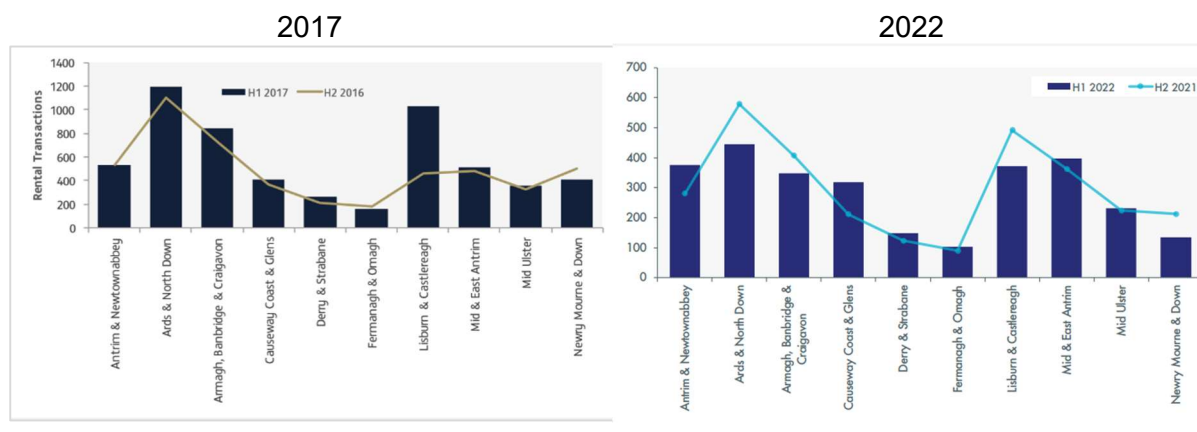
Figure 5.3.5: Average annual house prices in Ards and North Down and NI



Source: NI Housing Executive Housing Investment Plan 2023-2026

In 2017, Market research showed that Ards and North Down had the largest rental market outside Belfast with 1,199 rental transactions in the first half of 2017. The average monthly rent was £609 - above the NI average of £595¹. In 2022, Ards and North Down continues to have the largest rental market, average rents were £781, but the Borough also had the highest comparative rental spread, reflecting the variation and availability of rental stock².

Figure 5.3.6: Rental Transactions by Council 2017 (left) and 2022 (right)



Source: Ulster University, Performance of the Private Rental Market Issue Number 9 H1 January-June 2017 and Issue Number 19 H1 2022

Vacancy Rates, Unfitness and Decent Homes

Vacancy rates are often an indicator of stock condition and the availability of existing housing stock. Dwellings unfit for habitation and second homes that are unoccupied contribute to vacancy rates reducing the supply of available housing.

¹ Ulster University Performance of the Private Rental Market January-June 2017

² Ulster University Performance of the Private Rental Market H1 January-June 2022

Figure 5.3.7: Vacancy Rates by Dwelling Tenure in Ards and North Down 2016

Ards and North Down	Owner Occupied %	Private Rented %	Social Housing %
Vacancy Rate	72	15	12

Source: Northern Ireland Stock Condition Survey 2016

Between 2011 and 2016 there was a decrease in the rate of unfitness of Northern Ireland's housing stock from 4.6% to 2.1%. The three most common reasons for a property being classified as unfit in 2016 were: - Dampness (9,300 dwellings); - Serious disrepair (9,100 dwellings); - Unsatisfactory facilities for the preparation and cooking of food (8,800 dwellings). Dwellings in rural areas were more likely to be unfit than those in urban areas but as the overall level of unfitness is now so low (2.1%) it is too small to give meaningful results at a Council level.

'Decent homes' considers a range of factors beyond unfitness including meeting modern standards. The proportion and number of stock in NI failing the decent homes standard has fallen by 70% since 2001. The proportion of stock failing the 'Decent Homes Standard' in 2016 was 8% which equated to 61,000 homes. The types of dwellings most likely to fail included vacant properties, older properties built before 1919 or those located in small villages, hamlets or open countryside.

Fuel Poverty

A household is considered to be in fuel poverty if, in order to maintain a satisfactory level of heating, (21°C in the main living area and 18°C in other occupied rooms), it is required to spend in excess of 10% of its household income on all fuel. This definition of Fuel poverty is based on the 10% methodology as defined in the Northern Ireland Stock Condition Survey 2016¹.

Key findings of the Northern Ireland House Condition Survey 2016 show a reduction in fuel poverty and improvements in energy efficiency of households in Northern Ireland².

In 2016, 20% of households in Ards and North Down were living in fuel poverty a decrease of 17% since 2006. In 2017, 4740 approvals were issued to private households in Ards and North Down to assist with insulation and heating measures under the Affordable Warmth Scheme³.

In 2012, 48.4% of dwellings within Ards and North Down had an A-C energy rating, 42.3% of dwellings had a band D rating, 8.6% of dwellings had a band E rating and less than 1% fell within F-G band⁴.

Deprivation - Living Environment Rankings

Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measures 2017 explore the relative deprivation measures of small geographical areas known as super output areas (SOAs). There are 890 super output areas in NI, of which 86 are located in Ards and North Down.

Deprivation measures are grouped into seven domains. The *Living Environment* domain identifies the prevalence of shortcomings in the quality of housing, access to suitable housing and physical environment.

There are six SOAs within Ards and North Down that are ranked in the top 100 most deprived in terms of living environment and Harbour 1 is the most deprived SOA within the Borough.

¹ NIHE, Northern Ireland Stock Condition Survey 2016

² NIHE, Northern Ireland Stock Condition Survey 2016

³ Ards and North Down Housing Investment Plan Annual Update 2017

⁴ Northern Ireland Stock Condition Survey 2016

Figure 5.3.8: Top 11 Living Environment domain rankings for Ards and North Down

Super Output Area	Living Environment Ranking
Harbour 1	21
Cultra	43
Bryansburn	47
Killinchy	60
Harbour 2	64
Hollywood Demesne	91

Source: NISRA – NI Multiple Deprivation Measures 2017

5.3.3 Likely Evolution of the Baseline without the Local Development Plan

Without a new LDP in place, the RDS, the SPPS, the extant Plans and PPSs would all still be applied and stakeholder consultation would also continue to inform decisions. However, the draft BMAP and ADAP were not prepared in the context of the Ards and North Down Borough area. These plans are unlikely to reflect the current needs of residents, or support delivery of the Community Plan. In the absence of a new plan, there is a risk that policies and development would not reflect the needs of the future residents. A new plan would bring an opportunity to develop a plan led system able to reflect the most recent strategies. In the absence of a new plan, there may be less opportunity to consider zonings for housing in the context of current conditions and to design sustainable housing that accommodates existing and predicted demography.

5.3.4 Key Sustainability Issues for Housing

- The increasingly ageing population, combined with decreasing average household sizes may increase demand for smaller housing units.
- Increasing demand for smaller accommodation could lead to lack of supply and make smaller accommodation less affordable.
- Regional policy targets 60% of housing to be provided on brownfield sites in settlements with a population of 5,000 or more.
- Some sites zoned for housing within the Borough have had zero development, identifying why land has gone undeveloped may be necessary when considering future land zoning.
- The declining rural population and increased pressure for housing in urban areas could increase the rural isolation felt by some communities.
- Affordable housing is required for a variety of housing types and sizes. Housing need is greatest in the settlements of Bangor, Newtownards, Hollywood and Comber, however a substantial proportion of waiting list applicants are in rural areas.
- In recent years, affordable housing need in Ards and North Down has been delivered by housing associations on Housing Executive land. Increasingly, areas of housing need are emerging in locations where the Housing Executive does not own land.
- Lack of land availability in areas of high demand could lead to unaffordability in some areas.
- Demand for affordable housing that is not available could lead to increased demand in the private rented sector which could lead to affordability issues.
- 20% of households within Ards and North Down experience fuel poverty. New housing should be low carbon and energy efficient to help reduce the problems of fuel poverty.
- Areas of deprivation in terms of living environment were identified in MDMNI 2017.

5.4 Education and Skills

5.4.1 Review of Policies, Plans, Programmes and Strategies

Education and skills takes account of learning from primary to third level education, in addition to vocational training. Good educational and skills outcomes support people to succeed economically, have better life chances and can enable opportunities for better health.

Low educational attainment and low skills levels significantly constrain life chances and increase the risk of poverty and poor health. Significant inequality in educational attainment exists within NI. Access to high quality education and skills training can be increased through cooperation between statutory agencies and other institutions. Overarching policies recognise that the education and skills levels of the population must improve in order meet the needs of communities and businesses. This will allow businesses to make use of opportunities for regional and global trade, and will help create conditions for increased high quality employment.

Education is one of the most significant investments in developing the individual, society and the economy. The overall vision of the Department of Education (DE) is to see *“every young person achieving to his or her full potential at each stage of his or her development”*.

In recent years there have been a number of influential publications which challenged all those involved in the education sector to consider new approaches. This includes sharing of facilities, which would promote a more cohesive and tolerant society and may provide a better use of the resources available to education.

In 2009, the Department of Education introduced the ‘Sustainable Schools Policy’. This was followed in 2011 by an area planning process, designed to address the long-term primary school needs from 2012-2025. The overall output of these is the assessment of schools against a set of criteria for sustainable enrolment levels, delivery of quality education and financial sustainability.

The Planning for Sustainable Provision: Strategic Area Plan 2022-27 aims to establish a network of viable schools that are of the right type, the right size, located in the right place, and have a focus on raising standards. The aim of area planning is to ensure that all pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum in sustainable, fit-for-purpose schools.

The Department of Education has overall responsibility for education policy and the Education Authority (EA) oversees the delivery of education, youth and library services. EA, in partnership with the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, Controlled Schools’ Support Council, Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta, Governing Bodies Association, Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education, Catholic Schools’ Trustee Service and the Further Education sector publishes an annual Action Plan to identify area planning solutions within each Council.

The PfG and the draft Industrial Strategy - Economy 2030, recognise that appropriately skilled people are integral to productivity growth, competitiveness and our future economic prosperity. The Council’s Integrated Strategy for Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development recognises that future business and economic growth will require high-level skills. To fulfil needs and avail of opportunities, people and organisations need to ensure the right skills and resources are in place. The Belfast Region City Deal, of which Ards and North Down is a partner council, includes Employability and Skills among its pillars of investment.

Within a land use planning context, LDPs should allocate sufficient land to meet the anticipated educational needs of the community. They should recognise town centres as important hubs for a range of uses, including education. Within a rural context, policy requires that people who live in the countryside should also have opportunities to access high quality education and learning.

The Council's Corporate Plan 2024-2028 has the vision of 'A Sustainable Borough' and includes the Economic Priority – "Increasing economic growth by attracting more jobs and businesses".

Access to high quality education is also identified as an important outcome within the Borough's Community Plan, '*The Big Plan*'. It emphasises the importance of educational attainment in creating prosperous communities and improving well-being. The Plan aims to address deprivation and to increase economic opportunities through improved access to employment and skills training. Part of the Plan's Vision is, "*to have empowered, resilient individuals and communities*" which would be supported by well-educated residents. The Plan has placed education and skills at its core by aspiring "*for people through all stages of life to gain the educational and life skills needed for learning, life and work.*"

5.4.2 Baseline Information

A baseline of information is also presented in the LDP POP Position Paper 'Population Growth and Housing' Uses'. Relevant information has also been sourced from NISRA. This topic overlaps with the Health and Wellbeing, Community, Economy and Employment and Transport and Accessibility topics. The distribution of schools and colleges in the Borough is shown in Figure 5.4.1.

Pre-school Education

There are six nursery schools or units within the Borough and 35 pre-schools¹. Nursery schools provide pre-school education for children in their immediate pre-school year. Pre-schools are private or voluntary education settings which may also provide funded pre-school education places. Figure 5.4.1 shows that nursery schools are located only in the three main settlements, plus one at Kircubbin. While pre-schools are more widely distributed, including in the smaller settlements, there is limited provision in the south of the Borough and children may have to travel considerable distances to reach their nearest pre-school.

Primary School Education

The Strategic Area Plan 2022-27 Operational Plan 1² states that the primary school age population is declining across NI as a whole, and the projected primary school age population (Year 1 – Year 7) in Ards and North Down is projected to decrease from 12,832 in 2024 to 11,236 in 2035.

Primary education in ANDBC is provided by 45 primary schools, of which 3 have specialist provision.

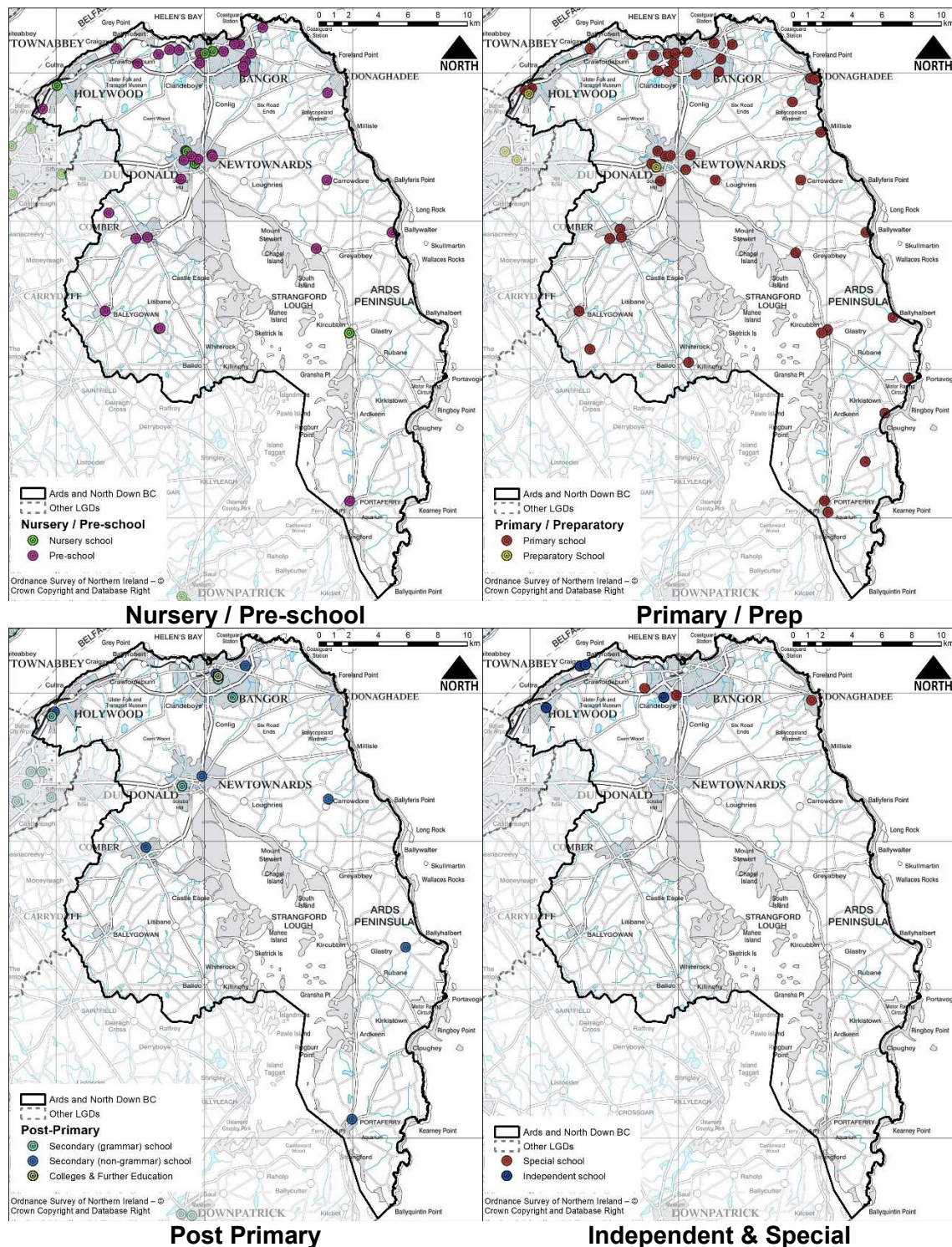
The Borough's four independent schools also provide education for 4-11 year olds, but as these schools receive no funding from the Education Authority, they are not included in the Operational Plan.

Currently 8 primary schools do not meet the minimum enrolment threshold of the 'Sustainable Schools' policy. The Operational Plan considers that there are not expected to be issues arising in respect of the overall availability of primary school places, however, there are geographical areas and sectors within the LGD where there are shortfalls in specialist provision.

¹ Department of Education (NI) Schools+ database (via Opendata NI, Updated July 2017)

² Education Authority et al (2022) Strategic Area Plan [and Special Education Strategic Area Plan] 2022-27: Planning for Sustainable Provision: Operational Plan 1: 2022-24

Figure 5.4.1: Spatial distribution of education establishments in Ards and North Down Council.



Source: Spatial NI (Department of Education) & Opendata NI Location of Schools

Post Primary Education

The Strategic Area Plan 2022-27 Operational Plan 1¹ states that the post-primary school age population is declining across NI as a whole, and the projected primary school age population (Year 8 – Year 12) in Ards and North Down is projected to decrease from 10,359

¹ Education Authority et al (2022) Strategic Area Plan [and Special Education Strategic Area Plan] 2022-27: Planning for Sustainable Provision: Operational Plan 1: 2022-24

in 2024 to 8,753 in 2035. The post 16 school-age population is projected to decrease from 2,605 to 2,184 in the same period.

Post-primary education is provided by 12 post-primary schools, of which 2 have specialist provision.

The four independent schools described in the previous section also enrol post-primary age pupils, but are not included in the Operational Plan.

Currently, three post-primary schools do not meet the minimum enrolment threshold of the 'Sustainable Schools' policy for years 8-12 and two do not meet the threshold for 16+. The Operational Plan considers that there are not expected to be issues arising in respect of the overall availability of post primary school places, as the number of pupils is predicted to decline. However, there are geographical areas and sectors within the LGD where there are shortfalls in specialist provision.

Further & Higher Education

South Eastern Regional College (SERC) has eight campuses located across the south-east region. There are two main campuses in the Borough, at Bangor and Newtownards, plus an out-centre at Holywood. SERC works in collaboration with over 20 schools in the South East Region to deliver professional and technical courses as part of the Entitlement Framework. SERC also works with many community and statutory organisations to deliver courses in community centres, schools, halls and clubs.

Special Education

There are three special schools in the Borough. Clifton School provides for pupils with severe learning difficulties from pre-school to Key Stage 5. Killard House provides for pupils with moderate learning difficulties from pre-school to Key Stage 4. Lakewood School provides for pupils with behavioural difficulties for Key Stages 3 and 4. The Operational Plan has noted that there has been considerable growth in the number of pupils attending special schools in the area and the projections indicate that demand is expected to grow for places in this sector. There may be a need to repurpose existing accommodation or to provide additional accommodation to meet increasing need in the future.

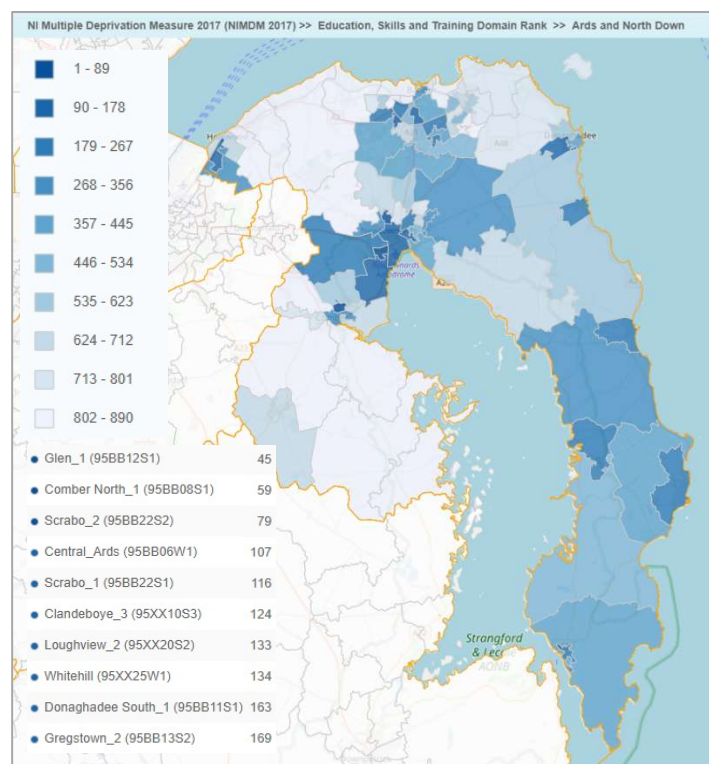
Pupils with special needs living in the south of the Borough, especially those in the south west, may have to travel considerable distances to attend the schools that can accommodate their requirements.

NI Multiple Deprivation Measure 2017

The Education, Skills and Training Deprivation Domain in the NIMDM 2017 identifies the prevalence of poor educational outcomes for children and low levels of qualifications for working age adults. The indicators used in the ranking of this domain include:

- Proportions of pupils attending special schools or attending primary school with Special Educational Needs stage 3-5;
- Absenteeism at primary schools;
- Proportions of school leavers not achieving 5 or more GCSEs at A*- C (and equivalent) incl. English and Maths;
- Proportions of those leaving school ages 16, 17 and 18 and not entering Education, Employment or Training;
- Proportions of 18-21 year olds not enrolled in Higher Education courses;
- Proportions of pupils attending special schools or who are attending post-primary schools with special educational needs stages 3-5;
- Absenteeism at post-primary schools; and
- Proportions of working age adults (25-64) with no or low levels of qualification.

Figure 5.4.2: NIMDM 2017 Education, Skills and Training Domain Rank (Super Output Areas) for Ards and North Down



Source: NISRA NIMDM 2017 SOA Level Results Interactive Maps - Education, Skills and Training Domain (Super Output Areas)

Figure 5.4.2 shows the NIMDM 2017 rank for Super Output Areas in Ards and North Down for the Education, Skills and Training deprivation domain. The figure shows that, generally speaking, the east of the Borough and the Ards peninsula are ranked higher / more deprived (the darker blue colours) than the north and west. It also shows that the most deprived SOAs (top quintile, ranks 1 - 178) are within the main towns of Bangor, Comber, Holywood and Newtownards, however Donaghadee also features.

Educational Attainment

Educational attainment in Ards and North Down is generally above average for the NI LGDs, with Table 5.4.1 showing the qualifications of school leavers in 2016/17 and 2018/19. However, across the Borough there is significant variation in educational attainment. The indicators used in the NIMDM 2017 show that while six SOAs have 10% or less of their school leavers leaving with fewer than 5 GCSE passes, 28 SOAs, shown in Figure 5.4.3, have more than 40% of pupils leaving school with fewer than 5 GCSEs (including English and Maths). There were three SOAs with more than 60% of school leavers receiving fewer than five GCSEs.

Table 5.4.1: Qualifications of school leavers by 2014 district council of pupil residence 2016/2017⁽¹⁾ (3)

	2+ A-levels A*-E ⁽²⁾		5+ GCSEs A*-C ⁽²⁾		5+ GCSEs A*-C ⁽²⁾ inc. GCSE English and Maths	
	2016/17	2018/19	2016/17	2018/19	2016/17	2018/19
Ards and North Down	64.2	54.9	86.9	88.4	74.2	71.1
NI Total	58.5	55.6	83.8	86.4	69.6	70.8

Table 5.4.2: Qualifications of school leavers by 2014 district council of pupil residence 2021/22^{(1) (3)}

	2+ A-levels A*-E ⁽²⁾	5+ GCSEs A*-C ⁽²⁾	5+ GCSEs A*-C ⁽²⁾ inc. GCSE English and Maths
	2021/22	2021/22	2021/22
Ards and North Down	62.3	93.1	82.0
NI Total	57.8	91.9	78.0

1. Excludes special and independent schools

2. Includes equivalent qualifications

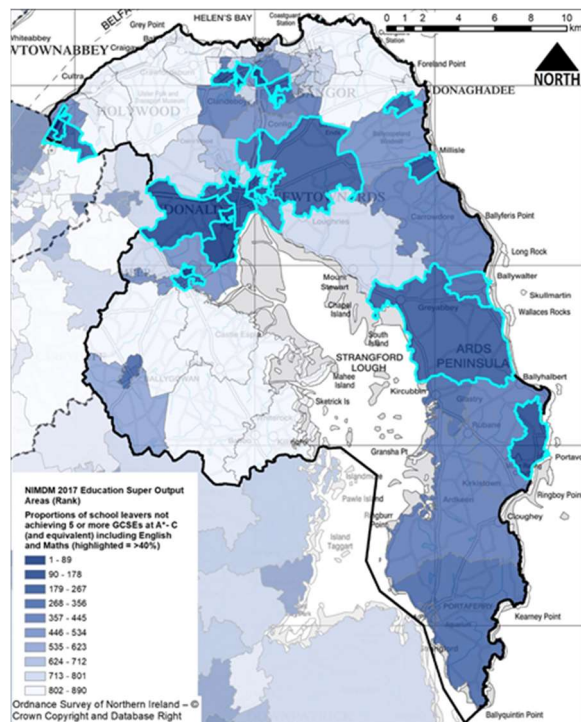
3. District Council of pupil residence is based on the residential postcode of each individual pupil

Source: NISRA 2016/17 statistical bulletin Qualifications & destinations of Northern Ireland school leavers table 2016/17

published: 31.05.18; NISRA 2018/19 statistical bulletin Qualifications & destinations of Northern Ireland school leavers table

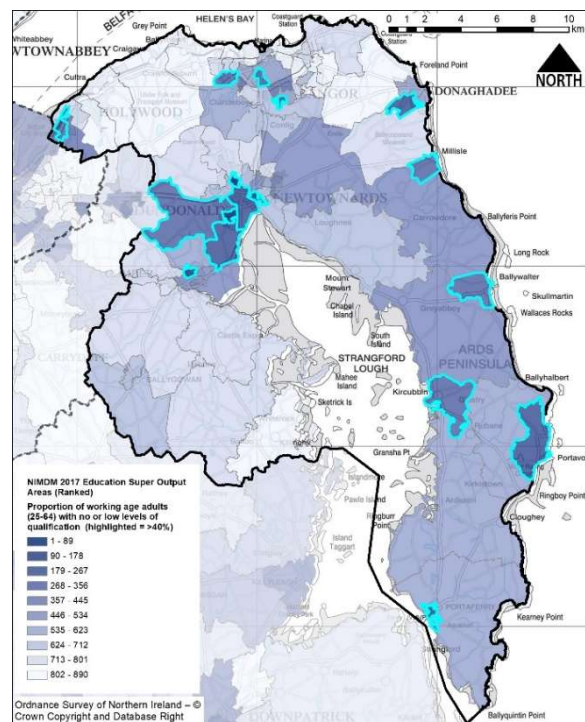
2018/19 published: 12.08.20 and NISRA Qualifications and Destinations of Northern Ireland School Leavers 2021-22

Figure 5.4.3 NIMDM 2017 SOA Proportions of school leavers not achieving 5 or more GCSEs at A*- C (and equivalent) including English and Maths



(For 2014/15 to 2015/16 academic years).
Highlights show areas in excess of 40%.

Figure 5.4.4: NIMDM 2017 SOA Proportion of working age adults (25-64) with no or low levels of qualification



(Derived from Census 2011).
Highlights show areas in excess of 40%

Source: NISRA - Deprivation Education, Skills and Training Indicators - NIMDM 2017 (statistical geographies) - Table view.

Skills Level of Working age population

Of all the LGDs, ANDBC has amongst the highest proportion (36% in 2016, 41% in 2019 and 42% in 2022¹) of resident 16-64 year olds with a qualification at or above NVQ level 4. The NI averages over the same periods were 31%, 37% and 39%).

The Borough also has among the lowest proportion of persons of working age with no Qualifications. This was 11% in 2016, 8% in 2019 and 9% in 2022. The NI averages over the same periods were 16%, 14% and 14%.

¹ Labour Force Survey Tables for Local Government Districts 2009-2019 (Date published: 01 October 2020)

However, the NIMDM 2017 also demonstrates that there is a significant variation across the Borough in the proportion of the population with 'no or low levels of qualifications' (NVQ Level 1 / equivalent or none). In 17 of the Borough's SOAs, more than 40% of the working age population have no or low levels of qualification. In general, the areas identified rank relatively highly in their level of deprivation, as shown in Figure 5.4.4.

The Council's Integrated Strategy for Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development notes that the skills of the local labour market must meet the needs of businesses within high value-added sectors. This is notable in the context of the current median salaries for those working in the Borough (further discussed in section 5.5.2), which is significantly lower than the NI average. It identifies 'Information and Communication', 'Professional, Scientific and Technical' and 'Arts, Entertainment and Recreation' as high growth sectors. 'Advanced engineering and manufacturing', 'financial, professional and business services' and digital and creative technologies are key sectors attracting foreign direct investment to NI.

A key objective of the Integrated Strategy is to address skills gaps by helping schools and colleges to fully understand the skills needs of local businesses, so that educational programmes and careers advice can be accurately targeted. It identifies local apprenticeships with partner organisations as an excellent route to businesses developing their own skills base in Economic Development and Tourism.

5.4.3 Likely Evolution of the Baseline within the Local Development Plan

Without a new LDP there may be fewer opportunities to look at settlement pattern and school sustainability or to help facilitate skills training and further education in areas of greatest need.

5.4.4 Key Sustainability Issues for Education and Skills

- A declining birth rate has contributed to a number of primary and post-primary schools facing sustainability challenges.
- The level of provision of primary and post-primary school places is expected to meet current and projected demand.
- Despite the declining birth rate, there is projected growth in the need for special school places and a potential need for additional specialist accommodation.
- Although the Borough has, in general, a high level of educational achievement in comparison to the NI average, achievement is not consistent across the Borough. In some areas, more than 40% of working age adults have no qualifications, or low levels of qualification.
- To respond to changing opportunities in the context of COVID-19 and the UK exit from the EU, there is a need to upskill / reskill people in employment and to support people that are unemployed, underemployed or economically inactive to upskill / reskill.
- Apprenticeships and higher-level apprenticeship should be promoted and supported as alternative pathways for employment.
- Digital literacy, connectivity and access to broadband are important for developing/enhancing skills and reducing inequalities. .

5.5 Economy and Employment

5.5.1 Review of Policies, Plans, Programmes and Strategies

Creating the conditions to achieve and maintain stable economic growth are key aims of all relevant strategies locally, regionally and within a European context. Economic growth is driven by a healthy business sector, which itself relies on a base of high quality education, and delivery of relevant skills to the workforce.

The common thread of relevant economic policies is to achieve sustainable growth of the economy. In particular, policy recognises the priority in Northern Ireland (NI) to raise competitiveness through increased export, and to identify opportunities in new, emerging and developed markets. The need to support the development of a more innovation-based economy is also identified and this links to a high potential for research and development.

The RDS 2035 identifies Newtownards a main hub in the Council and Strangford Lough and Coast as a Strategic Natural Resource.

Within current planning policy, it is recognised that planning authorities should take a positive approach to sustainable economic development and enable job creation, giving priority to large scale proposals with job creation potential, through zoning land and promoting developments in settlement hubs. Policy also refers to the importance of creating the right conditions for investment through supporting urban and rural renaissance, ensuring that settlements remain vital. In terms of regional policy there is a recognition that accessible land should be made available to promote job creation and to promote sustainable economic growth at key locations.

The draft Marine Plan includes key activity policies supporting aquaculture, commercial fishing, port, harbours and shipping and tourism and recreation, which may overlap with the LDP. It recognises that the coastal area is a key element of Northern Ireland's appeal as a tourism destination and an integral part of the visitor experience and is promoted through activity tourism, golf tourism, world-renowned attractions and coastal routes.

The PfG recognises that Northern Ireland's attractiveness as a tourism destination is an important aspect of the Regional economy. The development of a Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland to 2030 is a key project for the Department of the Economy, which recognises the contribution of the tourism sector to the growth of the Northern Ireland economy and the delivery of jobs and investment. The Draft Northern Ireland Tourism Strategy 2020 was identified in the PfG as one of the 'building blocks' to underpin the first strategic priority of growing a sustainable economy and investing in the future.

The Integrated Strategy for Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development in Ards and North Down 2018 - 2030, identifies the key assets of the Borough, as well as economic and environmental challenges faced at local and regional level. It presents a confident and ambitious plan for the future.

The Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD), signed in December 2021, involves an integrated programme of investment that cuts across the responsibilities of local Councils, the Northern Ireland Executive and UK Government. The BRCD Councils have agreed an integrated set of projects to transform the Region's economy. The agreed programme seeks to address a number of key barriers to growth by taking measures to improve productivity, invest in innovation, tackle economic inactivity and deprivation, address skills gaps and inequalities, invest in additional world-class visitor experiences and develop the physical and digital infrastructure.

The Council's Corporate Plan 2024-2028 has the vision of 'A Sustainable Borough' and includes the Economic Priority – "Increasing economic growth by attracting more jobs and businesses". It also includes "a thriving and sustainable economy" and "a vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors" among its strategic outcomes.

A prosperous economy is an important outcome of 'The Big Plan' 2017 - 2032. The plan emphasises the importance of addressing deprivation through a prosperous economy. The fourth outcome of 'The Big Plan' is to ensure that all people in the Borough will benefit from a prosperous economy. The plan focuses on the potential to develop economic opportunities within the Borough. Attractive town and village centres and access to leisure and tourist facilities is an important aspect of this outcome. The plan recognises the importance of improved infrastructure and digital communication in supporting new business development opportunities.

5.5.2 Baseline Information

A detailed baseline of information is presented in a number of Local Development Plan Position Papers, including 'Employment and Industry', 'Town Centres and Retailing', 'Tourism' and 'The Coast'. Data have also been sourced from NISRA, the NINIS and the Department for Economy. This topic overlaps with the Health and Well-being, Natural Resources, Physical Resources and Historic Environment topics.

Overview

Ards and North Down is one of the smallest Council areas in NI, comprising approximately 3.4% of NI's total land area. However, it provides services to over 160,000¹ residents, (around 8.5% of the total NI population) and has more than 115 miles of coastline.

The RDS identifies Newtownards as the main gateway / hub in the Council, although a small portion of the Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area extends into the Borough. AND Council identifies Bangor and Newtownards as the Borough's strategic locations for employment/industrial development in the 'Employment and Industry' Position Paper. As will be further discussed in Chapter 5.8, 'Transport', there are no RDS Key Transport Corridors in the Borough, although a Link Corridor exists between Belfast and Newtownards. There is also a railway link between Bangor and Belfast.

Economic Activity and Employment

Economic well-being is discussed in detail in the Baseline report for 'The Big Plan'². It reports that in 2015 the economic activity rate in the council (78%) for working age people was slightly higher than the NI average (73%)³. This continued to be the case in 2017 and in the most recently published figures (2022) 75% (NI 73%)³.

The 'Employment and Industry' POP Position Paper noted that, based upon 2014 projections, the number of residents at working age (16-64) will fall by 6% between 2014 and 2030; potentially resulting in a decline in the number of residents in employment at the end of the Plan period, should current employment rates remain constant. The more recent 2018-based NISRA population projections continue to predict a decrease in the proportion of working-age residents.

The percentage of people in Ards and North Down claiming Job Seekers Allowance 2016-2023 has been slightly lower than the NI average, with the most recent figure 2.7% (NI 3.1%)⁴. Over the period 2018-2022 Ards and North Down also had the lowest rate of young people Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) at 7.8% (NI 10.3%).

Employment and Income Deprivation

NISRA publishes spatially linked statistics on deprivation as part of the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure, the most recent of which was published in 2017 (NIMDM2017). In total, seven deprivation indicators make up the overall NIMDM, including the 'Employment Deprivation Domain' and the 'Income Deprivation Domain'. Each Super

¹ NISRA 2016-based Population Projections for Areas within Northern Ireland Date Published: 26 April 2018

² Ards and North Down Borough Council Community Planning. Collecting the evidence: The Big Conversation and our statistical baseline. Print Friendly statistical baseline.

³ Department for Communities (online) Northern Ireland Local Labour Market Insight dashboard 'Economic Inactivity' (accessed 01/03/24)

⁴ Department for Communities (online) Northern Ireland Local Labour Market Insight dashboard 'Claimant Count' (accessed 01/03/24)

Output Area (SOA) and Small Area (SA)¹ has been ranked against all the other SOAs and SAs in NI, to determine their relative position on the scale in terms of each indicator. It should be noted that the NIMDM 2017 is a relative measure of deprivation, meaning that it is possible to say that one area is more or less deprived than another, but it is not possible to say by how much.

‘Employment Deprivation’ rankings are calculated on the basis of the proportion of working age population in the SOA or SA who are in receipt of at least one employment related benefit, and individuals who are not in receipt of the selected benefits, nor have received income from employment². Figure 5.5.1 shows the pattern of employment deprivation in the SAs across Ards and North Down from the NIMDM2017. The darkest blue colours (ranks 1-454) show the most deprived SAs in NI in terms of the employment deprivation indicator and the lightest colours (4,804-4,537) are the least deprived.

Figure 5.5.1: NIMDM 2017 Employment Domain Rank for SAs in Ards and North Down

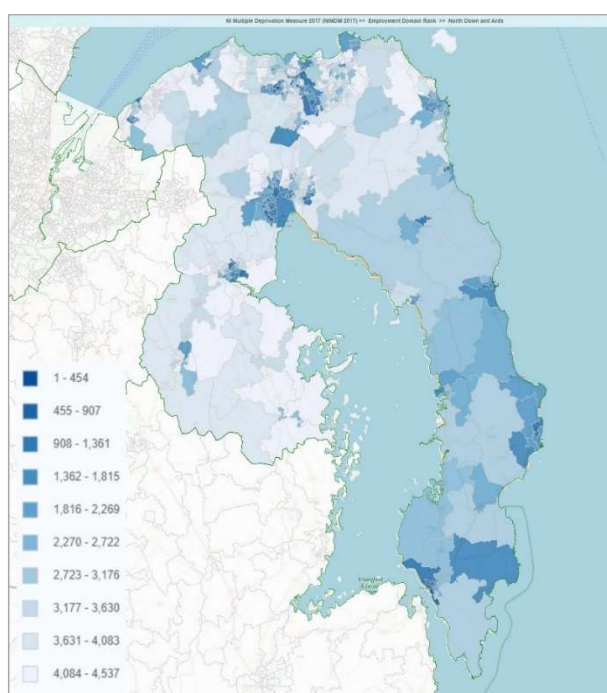
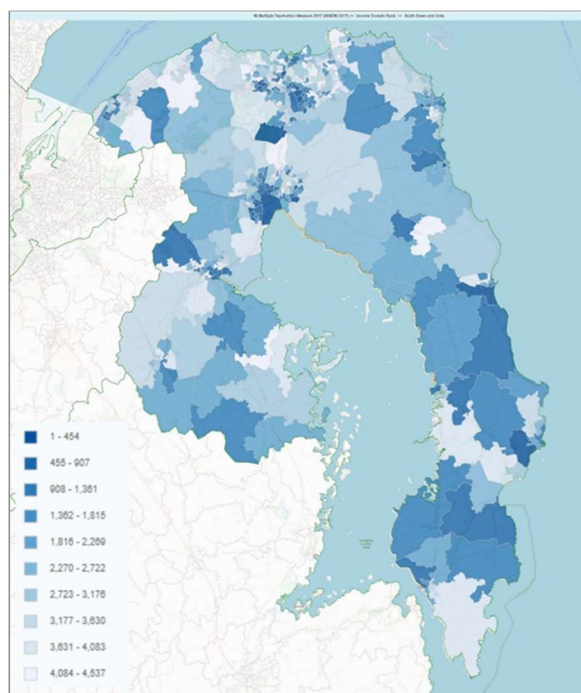


Figure 5.5.2: NIMDM 2017 Income Domain Rank for SAs in Ards and North Down.



Source: NIMDM2017 Small Area interactive maps on NINIS

It can be seen in this that the SAs in the Ards peninsula generally have greater employment deprivation than the north and east of the Borough. The ten most employment deprived areas in the Borough are in urban areas of Bangor, Newtownards, Donaghadee and Portaferry. However, none of the SAs in Ards and North Down are within the top 100 (out of 4,537) most deprived areas of NI in terms of employment. Eleven SAs in Ards and North Down are included in the 100 least deprived areas for employment (i.e. a rank higher than 4,437).

‘Income Deprivation’ rankings are calculated on the basis of the proportion of the population living in households whose equivalised income is below 60% of the NI median. Figure 5.5.2 shows the income deprivation pattern across Ards and North Down.

The figure shows that income deprivation in Ards and North Down is spread across both rural and urban areas, with many of the SAs shown in Figure 5.5.2 having the darkest blue

¹ Super Output Areas (SOA) and Small Areas (SA) are statistical geography boundaries created by NISRA to allow the reporting of small area statistics. There are 890 SOAs in NI and 4537 SAs.

² NISRA (2017) Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measures 2017 Description of Indicators

colours. However, the top 10 most income deprived small areas are in urban areas of Bangor, Newtownards and Donaghadee. Four of these are in the top 100 (out of 4,537) most income deprived SAs of NI. Five SAs in Ards and North Down are among the 100 least deprived areas for income (i.e. a rank higher than 4,437).

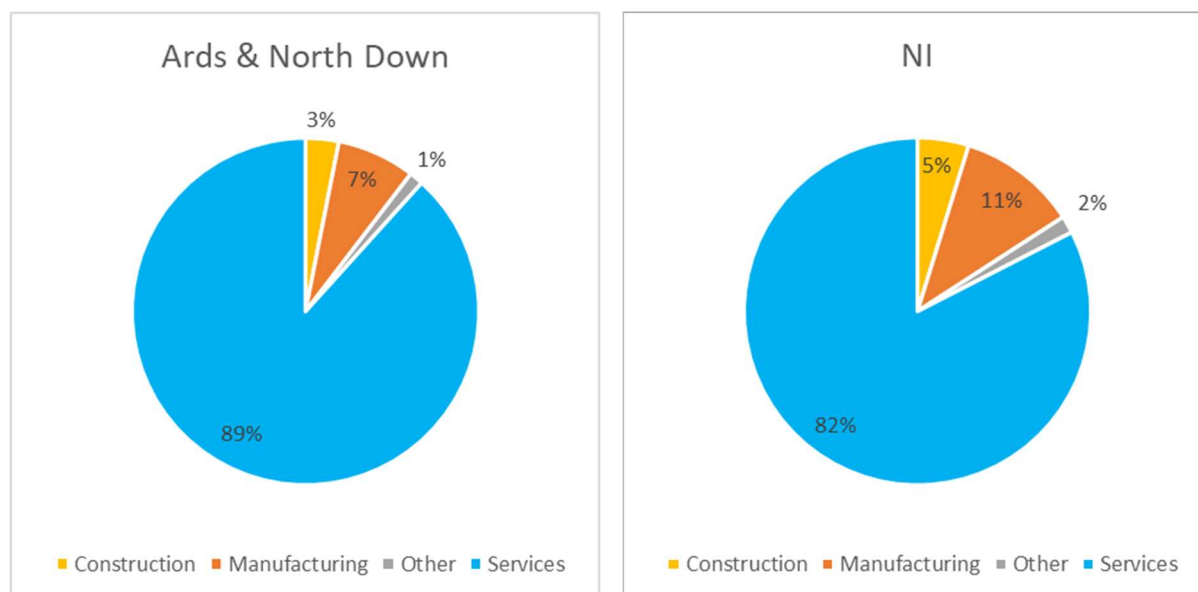
Employment Sectors

The Employment and Industry LDP position paper identifies that the tertiary (service) sector dominates the local employment market in terms of jobs and the number of VAT/PAYE registered businesses. On the Inter Departmental Business Register (IDBR) 2018, 88% of the businesses in the Borough were micro-businesses, with <9 employees, 10% were small businesses (10-49 employees), 1% were medium businesses and 0.2% were large businesses (>250 employees). These figures are largely unchanged in the IDBR 2023. Around a quarter of employee jobs in the Borough are in the public sector¹.

Para. 9.15 of the position paper notes that while NI is a global leader in many manufacturing sub-sectors, jobs within the manufacturing sector remain modest and reflective of historic downturn within this sector on the basis of wider economies of scale and job displacement. It forecasts predict substantial growth in aerospace, agri-food and sustainable energy by 2020. The Borough has a portfolio of top performing companies across these sectors.

The most recently published sectoral breakdowns, in Figure 5.5.3, show that in 2022 there was a greater than average proportion employed within the services sector and fewer in construction and manufacturing.

Figure 5.5.3: Percentage of Employee Jobs by Industry Sector vs NI overall (2022)



Source: Business Register and Employment Survey 2022, Table 3.1

The Census of Employment does not record the number of self-employed, or those that earn their living from agriculture. In 2015 there were estimated to be 11,000 self-employed persons in the Borough², representing 16% of those in employment (NI 14%). This has risen to 12,000 (17%) in 2023. The IDBR³ recorded 4,780 registered businesses in Ards and North Down in 2023 (up from 4,285 in 2015 and 4,555 in 2017). This represents 6% of all businesses in NI⁴. Of these, 12% were in the Agriculture sector (NI 24%).

¹ NISRA Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) 2017 published 27th September 2018 & 2022 published 26 September 2023

² Invest NI Council Area Profile for Ards and North (published July 2017 (accessed 20/12/2018) and published August 2023 (accessed 01/03/2024)

³ Office for National Statistics (online) Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR) UK business; activity, size and location: 2023

⁴ The IDBR excludes smaller businesses and the self-employed who fall below the VAT registered/PAYE thresholds.

Para. 9.19 states that rural - based enterprise is clearly important to the Borough, as is fishing. Fishing has been a major industry in the area for many years with local communities (such as at Portavogie) remaining at the centre of the trade today.

The paper recognises that, in the context of the labour market, there are relationships evident between Ards and North Down and other neighbouring council areas, particularly Belfast City. Belfast City Council is where many residents of Ards and North Down commute to and from where much of the Borough's workforce also commutes from. The paper recognises that connectivity to the transport network has a key role in improving sustainability and accessibility of employment in the Borough.

The Council's Integrated Strategy for Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development has placed a focus on attracting businesses involved in the ICT, Professional, Scientific and Technical, Financial/Insurance and Administration/Support sectors as well as sectors that will support enhanced tourism performance (e.g. Arts, Entertainment and Recreation and Accommodation/Food).

The Belfast Region City Deal Councils have agreed an integrated set of projects to transform the Region's economy. The City Deal focuses its efforts on areas in which the region can become genuinely world-class; namely digital / ICT, life and health sciences, creative industries, advanced manufacturing and tourism.

Earnings from Employment

The Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings¹ by Local Government Districts is published by NISRA. The 2023 survey results gave the value for those persons living in Ards and North Down a median gross annual salary of £25,626, (up from £21,042 in 2017 £20,769 in 2018 (provisional)). The median gross annual salary for all of NI in 2023 was £27,102. The median gross annual salary in 2023 for those working in the Borough was £22,585, considerably lower than for those living in the Borough and the lowest of all the NI LGDs. This discrepancy in earnings between those living and working in the Borough is due to a tendency for workers to commute out of the Borough for higher earning employment.

Business Start-ups and Success

The Office for National Statistics publishes an annual bulletin of Business Demography² which presents the number of active enterprises and charts the births of new enterprises, and deaths of enterprises. The number of enterprises active in Ards and North Down in 2022 was 4,645 (the average for 2017-2022 was 4,531). The five-year survival rate for businesses established in the Council area in 2017 was 54.7 (NI 54.6), an increase on the rate for businesses established in 2012, which was 43.9% (NI 44.7%). The average annual rate of new businesses over the period 2017-2022 has been 423 (range 370-485).

In general, business start-up rates for Northern Ireland are relatively low in comparison to other parts of the UK. The Corporate Plan has amongst its aims *'to create opportunities for local people and local communities to thrive by supporting sustainable economic growth over time'*.

Innovation

No data are available at Council level on innovation. It is widely recognised that improving the ability of the economy in NI to be innovative is a key factor in improving economic growth and employment. The most recent innovation figures are published in the UK Innovation Survey 2021³. These show that in 2014-16, fewer NI businesses were innovation active than in 2018-20. 38% of enterprises in NI were estimated to be innovation active in the three year period 2018-20 (down from 45% in 2012-14). This is lower than the equivalent UK figure of 45%, which has also decreased from 53% in 2012-14. NI remains among the least

¹ Department for the Economy Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings by NI geographies (Provisional), by place of work and place of residence, 2018 (Date published: 25 October 2018) and 2023 (date published 01 November 2023)

² Office for National Statistics 'Business demography, UK: 2017' (published 21 November 2018) and 2022 (published 22 November 2023)

³ Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy UK innovation survey 2021: report (published 12/05/2022)

innovation active regions of the UK. Across the UK, large enterprises with 250 or more employees are currently reported as being more likely to engage in some sort of innovation activity, with 58% innovation active, as opposed to 44% of Small-Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Internal R&D and investment in computer software were the main factors driving innovation in the UK as a whole for the most recent survey period 2018-2020.

Competitiveness

No data are available at Council level on levels of competitiveness. Total external sales by companies in NI to markets outside of NI were estimated to be worth £21.2 billion in 2020 (down from £21.9bn in 2017)¹. External sales account for around a third of all sales by companies in NI in 2020 (£67.1 billion). Business have reported that the Covid-19 pandemic was the significant factor in these falling sales.

The 2020 figures relate to goods and services combined, but in 2018 these figures comprised 70% for goods and 30% for services (an increase of 14.7% over 2017). The previously highest recorded peak was in 2016 (£23.8 billion) but 2017 and 2018 figure have shown a downwards trend in external sales.

Retailing

The Council has a hierarchy with Primary Retail Cores and Town Centres at Bangor, Holywood and Newtownards. In addition to these main centres, Town Centres are also identified at Comber and Donaghadee. Two District Centres and two Local Centres are also indicated in the 'Town Centres and Retailing' LDP Position Paper. In addition to the district centres there are two further 'out of centre' retail parks also located in the Borough.

The position paper has indicated that town centre vacancy rates are increasing in all but one of the town centres, yet demand is high for retail floorspace in out of town centres. It notes that national retailers are increasingly focusing on district centres and out of town centres, in conflict with 'the town centre first' approach. The paper indicates that a tailored, town specific approach to policy concerning Town Centres and Retailing may be warranted. The Integrated Strategy for Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development in Ards and North Down has also identified that an important means of reinvigorating our town and village centres is to ensure they sustain a residential population.

Ports and Harbours

Ports and harbours are important economic generators and are essential to the operation of a range of different marine and coastal industries. While there are no commercial ports in Ards and North Down, the Borough has ten harbours from which commercial fishing vessels are known to operate and many local quays, pontoons, slipways and harbours which are mainly used for recreation purposes.

The draft Marine Plan includes among its key activity policies a presumption in favour of port and harbour proposals and that public authorities must not authorise proposals that would interfere with navigational safety. However, new or increased development in harbours must be considered against potential impacts on other marine activities and the marine area.

The NI sea fishing sector employs 800-900 people, with approx. 80% of these full-time fishers. The NI sea fishing fleet currently has the largest proportion of vessels over 10 metres in the UK².

Portavogie is the second largest fishing port in NI; it landed 2,378 tonnes of fish and shellfish in 2022 with an estimated value of £6.56 million (in 2016 these figures were 2,095 tonnes / £6.97 million). Portavogie mainly lands high quality / high value shellfish, with 75% of the overall tonnage comprising prawns. Seven other smaller harbours in the Borough had commercially caught catches landed in 2016, with a combined total recorded value of £1.35

¹ NISRA Northern Ireland Broad Economy Sales and Exports Statistics (BESES): Goods and Services Results 2020 – published 15 Dec 2021

² UK Sea fisheries annual statistics report 2022 Section 1 – Fleet Summary Tables.

million. Of this, £1.1 million was at Bangor or Portaferry¹. The other harbours are Ballydorn, Ballyhalbert, Ballywalter, Donaghadee and Kircubbin. There are four EU-designated shellfish cultivation areas in the waters surrounding Ards and North Down and over 30 licensed aquaculture sites, growing mussels and oysters. Section 5.11.2 discusses these in more detail.

The Coast LDP Position Paper indicates that several food processing plants are located near Portavogie and that proposals have been made to upgrade the local facilities. Provision of improved local facilities and infrastructure could help to support more local jobs in this area.

There are a number of marinas in the Borough including Bangor, Copelands (Donaghadee) and Portaferry. Bangor marina is the largest marina in NI, with a total of 530 berths² while Portaferry has 50 berths including 14 visitor berths³. These harbours are within a day's sailing from Scotland and the Isle of Man which makes them attractive for small yachts. Bangor can accommodate drafts of up to 4m which also makes it attractive to larger sailing craft and motor boats. The 2016 report 'Sailing Tourism in Scotland'⁴ estimates the average expenditure per visitor boat night for Scottish marinas is £122 (not including mooring fees). This report also indicates that average party size is 2.9 and the average distance travelled per day is 27.6 nautical miles. Other findings in this report include that a lack of facilities/moorings and pontoons is a key factor in discouraging boat owners from travelling. The report also found that boat owners that wished to visit a location but hadn't, was most commonly due to a lack of facilities in that area.

More generally, harbours and marinas can be focal points for settlements. They can also function as an attraction/destination for land-based day trips and this is particularly notable at Bangor. The Borough's Flagship Project under the City Deal is the regeneration of Bangor Waterfront; other key projects include The Creative Innovation Hub in Holywood.

One local passenger and vehicle ferry service also operates from Ards and North Down. The Portaferry –Strangford ferry service crosses Strangford Lough at its narrowest point on a half hourly basis all year round and is operated by the Department for Infrastructure. The service reduces the 47 mile journey (which typically takes up to an hour and a half) between these villages to around 8 minutes. The ferry is used by around 550,000 passengers (with 180,000 vehicles) annually⁵ and is an important transport link in the local economy, carrying commuters and schoolchildren in addition to tourists.

Tourism

Investment in tourism brings new facilities to the Borough's towns, villages and surrounding landscape/seascape. It makes a vital contribution to the Borough in terms of the revenues it generates, the employment opportunities it provides, and the potential it creates for economic growth. It also provides the opportunity to get maximum benefit from our wealth of environmental and heritage assets; our waterways, landscapes and seascapes, and historic environment. There are also health benefits to be gained by a more active resident population who are motivated to be out and about exploring more of Ards and North Down's tourism assets.

The 'Tourism' LDP Position Paper has included a range of statistics on tourism within the Borough. Ards and North Down does not currently stand among the most visited of NI's LGDs as an overnight tourism destination, however, as shown in Figure 5.5.4 when the

¹ UK Government UK Sea fisheries annual statistics report: 2016 Supplementary Table 2012 to 2016 UK fleet landings and foreign fleet landings into the UK by port

² Quay Marinas website – Welcome to Bangor Marina (accessed 03/10/2018)

³ Portaferry Marina <http://www.portaferrymarina.co.uk/>

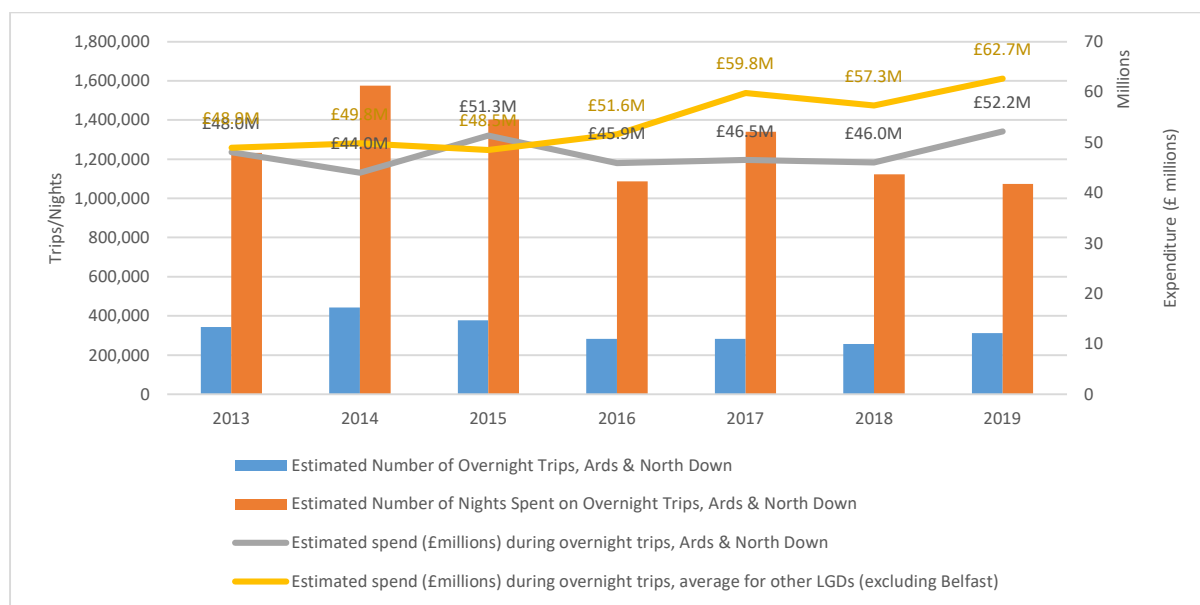
⁴ EKOS Ltd 'Sailing Tourism in Scotland' Report for The Crown Estate, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Scottish Canals December 2016

⁵ The Irish News, 10th March 2016 "Strangford ferry costs an average of £1.5m a year to run" (accessed 02 May 2016)

visitor figures are considered in the context of the Borough's size versus other larger LGDs, it performs favourably.

The Covid-19 pandemic has had significant effect on the sources of tourism statistics in NI and no new data have been published since 2019. Excluding day visits, tourism to the Borough in over the period 2013-2019 was worth £44 - £52million annually. Tourism-related employment supported 5,506 jobs in the Borough in 2019, an increase from 4,954 in 2015¹.

Figure 5.5.4: Estimated overnight Trips, Nights and Expenditure 2013 – 2019



Source: Local Government District tourism statistics publications 2019 (additional tables) (published 19 November 2020)

The principal reason that overnight visitors spend time in the Borough is 'visiting friends and relatives' (56% for the period 2015-7) and in 2019². Visits for 'holiday/leisure/pleasure' accounted for 30 - 36% of overnight trips over the same period. The Tourism Paper notes that very small proportion of visits are for business (4%, one of the lowest proportions of all the Councils) and this may be a potential growth area due to the proximity of Ards and North Down to Belfast.

The Borough has the third lowest quantity of available tourist accommodation of all the NI LGDs, with 109,000 rooms available in 2017 and 68,000 sold³. The Tourism Paper notes that the types of accommodation currently available in the Borough may not be as attractive to prospective tourism visitors in terms of price point and flexibility, however proximity to Belfast and the City Airport may enable parts of the Borough to market themselves as being well placed for business travel. Activity tourism or eco-tourism prospects may be better supported through development of alternative emerging accommodation types such as glamping pods and self-catering units. One of the actions of the Integrated Strategy for Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development in Ards and North Down is to seek to proactively support and advise those wishing to develop new and appealing concepts in sustainable accommodation provision which will showcase to best effect the attributes and assets of the destination, whilst meeting the needs of Ards and North Down's target segments. The Council's Food and Drink Destination Development Plan 2023-27 aims to support the Integrated Strategy in its aspiration for 'medium growth' in the accommodation and food sector.

¹ NISRA, Local Government District tourism statistics publications (additional tables) (published 26 July 2018) and 2019 (published 19 November 2020)

² Source NISRA Local government district tourism statistics infographics 2017 (Date published: 26 July 2018)

³ Tourism Statistics Bulletin Northern Ireland Local Government District Tourism Statistics 2017 Published 26 July 2018

The establishment and growth of the film and TV production industry in NI has also had an influence on tourism, by attracting visitors to the location settings used for popular productions. The capacity for rural areas to absorb significant volumes of visitors may be limited in some areas and this new tourism theme may place pressure on infrastructure and natural resources.

The marine area, its coastal waters, sea loughs and scenic shorelines are important components of the overall tourism and recreation sector. However, tourism and recreation also have the potential to generate adverse impacts on the marine area in terms of pressure from increased visitor numbers on heritage assets; the removal of species and plants, spreading of invasive species, the physical and visual disturbance of wildlife; pollution to water and litter - particularly in sensitive areas.

5.5.3 Likely Evolution of the Baseline without the Local Development Plan

Without a new LDP in place, the opportunity to make plans for growth in line with recent evidence and to develop a plan-led system may be missed. The absence of a LDP to address local needs could disadvantage those on lower incomes or in rural areas in terms of enabling access to places of work. The Council would be unable to facilitate sustainable tourism growth to adequately reflect the needs and assets unique to Ards and North Down.

5.5.4 Key Sustainability Issues for Economy and Employment

- Identifying and zoning appropriate land for development is a vital part of creating the right conditions to create and sustain economic activity that meets local employment needs whilst considering opportunities for regeneration.
- In selecting land for development, it is important to provide sites with quality environments that are readily accessible to the key transport corridors.
- Proposed new employment locations should be readily accessible by active travel and/or public transport.
- National and regional trends indicate an ongoing shift towards tertiary sector jobs. The Council and relevant statutory bodies should work with local providers of education and training to identify and address any local skills shortfalls and develop tailored learning to ensure its population has the skills and training to meet future demand.
- NI has seen a decrease in primary sector and manufacturing jobs in recent decades. However there are a number of successful strong manufacturing and agri-food businesses in the Council area which should be supported and growth in these areas encouraged.
- There is a need to ensure that the Borough is attractive to investors and higher skilled people.
- There is a need to support and enhance the diversity, vibrancy and vitality of town centres and the wider area, particularly in respect of effects initiated by the Covid-19 pandemic. This approach is needed to also attract investment and higher skilled people to the Borough.
- Commercial fishing landings at Portavogie harbour are an important contributor to the local economy, however significant commercial fish landings also occur at Bangor and Portaferry.
- Bangor Marina is the largest marina in NI and is renowned for its excellent facilities. Maritime tourism can provide strong economic benefits and other marinas in the Borough may have scope for attracting more visitors. The redevelopment of Bangor Waterfront is the Council's flagship project under the Belfast Region City Deal.
- Major opportunity exists for the expansion of the tourism industry across the Council area to attract investment, jobs and visitors. The film and television production industry has

helped to promote locations as places to visit and tourism priorities may be interlinked with regeneration and development, but may also place pressure on rural areas.

- The benefits of tourist attractions to the night-time economy should be recognised both in social and economic terms.
- Food Destination tourism has been identified in the Tourism Strategy as a key opportunity, as the Borough is a source of high quality agricultural produce and seafood.
- The Borough has a unique coastline. A joined up approach with neighbouring Council areas in establishing and promoting linked trails and experiences could bring added benefits.

5.6 Material Assets

5.6.1 Review of Policies, Plans, Programmes and Strategies

Material assets are referred to in the EAPP Regulations, but they are not defined. For the purposes of this report, the material assets sustainability topic covers a range of policy areas, including telecommunications, electrical infrastructure and energy distribution, energy including renewable energy, derelict and contaminated land, and waste management.

Overarching regional and strategic planning policy strives for the sustainable development of land to help ensure the integration of material assets. Growth of infrastructure should be enabled in an efficient and effective manner whilst environmental impacts are minimised. Strategic planning policy on renewable and low carbon energy and on oil and gas development has been undergoing review, which commenced in 2021.

The National Renewable Energy Action Plan for the UK 2010, the Sustainable Energy Action Plan 2012-15 and beyond, and the NI Waste Management Strategy are all relevant to material assets. Current policy encourages the multifunctional use of land; increases in renewables to the energy mix and reductions in waste / increases in recycling rates.

The Energy Strategy for Northern Ireland, published in December 2021, sets out a framework for achieving 100% reduction in energy-related emissions by 2050. It seeks to 'grow the green economy' by investing in green innovation and low carbon technologies and replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy. It seeks to renew focus on marine technologies and, in particular, that offshore wind should form a part of NI's future renewable electricity generation mix. The draft Marine Plan includes a presumption in favour of energy proposals that improve the security and diversity of energy supply [subject to no unacceptable adverse impacts] among its key activity policies and in December 2023 a new Offshore Renewable Energy Action Plan for NI was issued for consultation. The delivery of offshore renewables may necessitate coordination between different authorities. While development in the marine area is managed under a separate consenting regime, there are likely to be land-sea interactions and it is important for both terrestrial and marine planning to work together.

Decarbonising energy and reducing wastefulness/ growing a circular economy are also principles within DAERA's draft Green Growth and draft Environment Strategies, both of which were consulted on in late 2021.

Investing in telecommunications, particularly in rural areas and considering the infrastructure required for renewable energy projects and strengthening of the grid for future energy demands is encouraged at the regional level. New gas infrastructure is also supported as the move to gas helps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and meet UK climate change commitments. Climate change concerns encourage the use of renewables and a move toward a more sustainable energy mix that reduces emissions and improves air quality.

Sustainable waste management is also acknowledged as an opportunity to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by focusing on the waste management hierarchy, the proximity principle and the circular economy. Impacts should be considered of all types of installation on the environment and a strategic approach to the sustainable development of land could include multiple uses. For example, derelict land could be used to treat waste, which could in turn produce energy for local distribution.

The Integrated Strategy for Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development in Ards and North Down recognises the importance of quality infrastructure in delivering economic potential across the Borough. An objective of the strategy is to improve the quality of infrastructure, helping to increase the geographic spread of economic activity and investment. It also seeks to reduce the environmental and social impact of commuting which is a key issue for the Borough.

The Council's Digital Strategy 2019-2022 recognises that digital connectivity is central to economic competitiveness and emerging technologies are expected to play an important future role in supporting tourism, healthcare and other services.

Ards and North Down's Community Plan 2017-2032 entitled '*The Big Plan*', aims to create positive outcomes for everyone in the Borough. Being resilient to the effects of climate change and improving transport and digital connectivity are important to achieving the Community Plans outcome of having access to a well-managed sustainable environment.

The Council's Corporate Plan 2024-2028 has the vision of 'A Sustainable Borough' and includes the Environmental Priority – "reducing carbon emissions as we transition to net zero". It also includes "an environmentally resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets" and "an engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment" among its strategic outcomes.

5.6.2 Baseline Information

A detailed baseline of information is presented in the LDP Position Paper on Public Utilities. This topic also overlaps with the Community, Physical Resources and Climate Change topics of this report.

Telecommunications

There are four main network operators in NI: Vodafone, O2, Three and EE, all offering 3G and 4G services. A notable increase in 5G coverage was observed across Northern Ireland in 2023 with 'very high confidence' of coverage outside premises standing at 70% in areas served by at least one mobile operator (increased from 37% in 2022)¹.

In 2023 there is 98-99% of 4G mobile coverage outside premises across NI and 'good coverage' for 4G mobile data outdoors is shown for all four operators across the Borough. Across NI, indoor 4G coverage is available to 69-76% of premises in rural areas, whereas this figure is 91-98% for urban premises². It is apparent from Figure 5.6.1 that there are areas of the Borough which do not benefit from (indoor) 4G coverage.

In recent years, there has been increased consolidation and sharing of masts between O2 and Vodafone, and between EE and Three, which has seen coverage between sharing network providers converge, however coverage is poorer in rural areas of the Borough, which is consistent regionally.

The Shared Rural Network (SRN) project was agreed between the UK Government and the UK mobile operators in March 2020.¹⁴ The first deadline for the project is June 2024, when operators (under their licence obligations) are aiming to achieve good quality coverage across 88% of the UK landmass. This is due to rise to 90% by January 2027. The SRN would work by enabling customers to benefit from coverage in an area where there is at least one provider, even if they are not their provider of choice. It is expected that 4G indoor coverage will increase from 85% of the Borough to 99% of the Borough on conclusion of the SRN project³.

Broadband Speeds of 10Mbit/s or above are considered to be 'decent' by Ofcom the telecoms regulator. Broadband speeds of 10Mbit/s are widely available within the Borough. In 2023, 99% of premises in Ards and North Down were able to access superfast broadband (≥ 30 Mbit/s) and 94% able to access ultrafast broadband (≥ 300 Mbit/s). Only 0.3% of premises across NI are now unable to get 'decent' broadband⁴ through a fixed line connection.

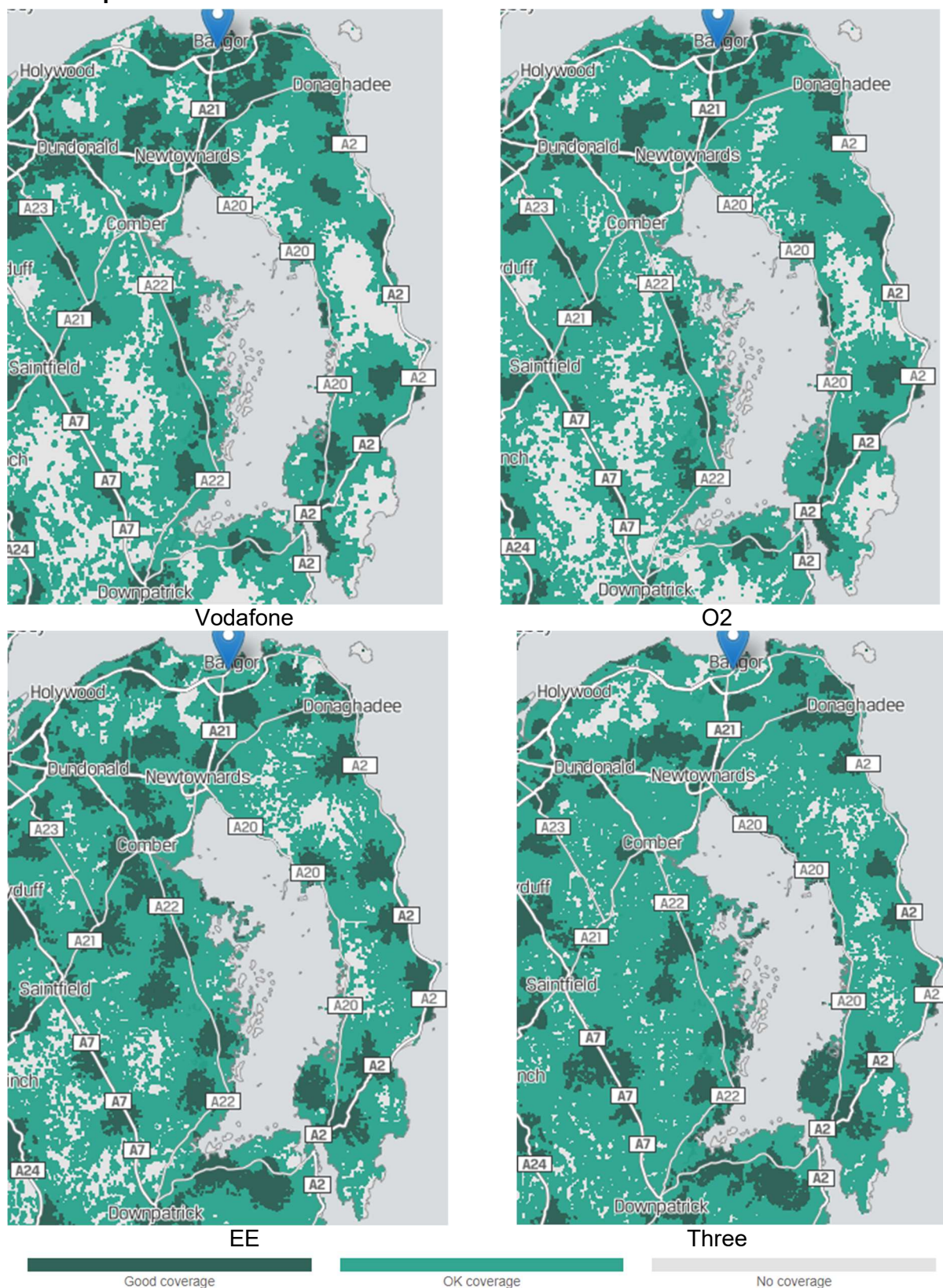
¹ Ofcom Connected Nations 2023: Nations Supplements - NI Summary (found at <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/multi-sector-research/infrastructure-research/connected-nations-2023/nations>) accessed 01/03/2024

² Ofcom Connected Nations 2023: Nations Supplements - NI Summary

³ Ofcom Connected Nations 2023: Nations Supplements - NI Summary Table 3.3

⁴ Ofcom Connected Nations 2023: Nations Supplements - NI Summary

Figure 5.6.1: levels of Indoor 4G (data) coverage within Ards and North Down for mobile operators



Source: Ofcom Mobile and Broadband Checker [online] (<https://checker.ofcom.org.uk/mobile-coverage> [accessed 01/03/2024])

As with mobile network coverage, the availability of faster broadband coverage is lower in rural areas. In Northern Ireland 'Project Stratum' aims to target rural premises currently unable to access a broadband service of at least 30 Mbit/s.

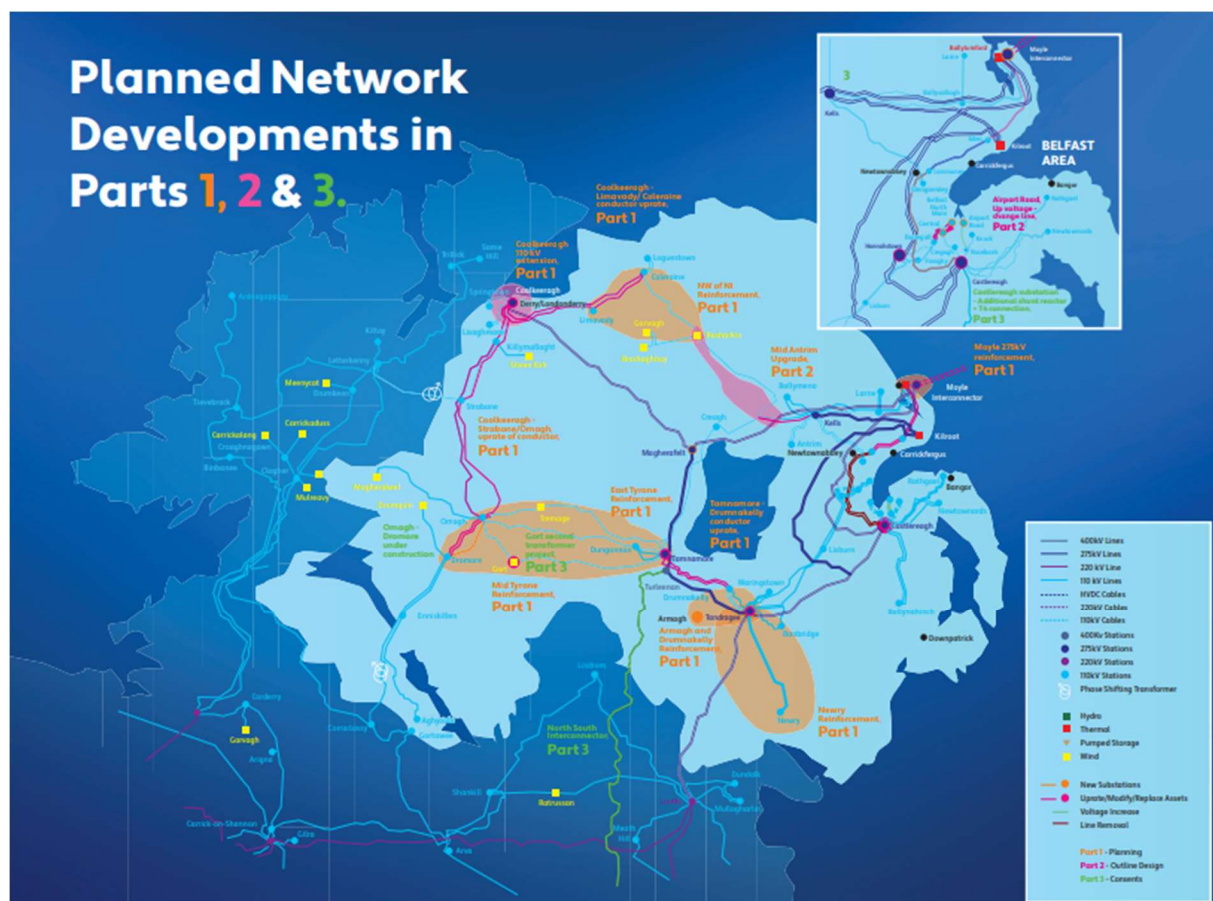
There is currently free town centre Wi-Fi provision in Bangor, Newtownards, Comber, Donaghadee and Holywood¹.

Energy Supply and Distribution/Electrical Infrastructure

The System Operator for Northern Ireland (SONI) is the independent operator managing the large-scale electrical transmission infrastructure across the country. It operates 1,500km of transmission power lines and 45,000km of distribution power lines. SONI displays realtime data on to the current energy sources for NI, including connected sources of renewables at <https://www.soni.ltd.uk/how-the-grid-works/>. Figure 5.6.2 shows the current and planned transmission network. All users are connected to the distribution network for their electricity².

As shown in Figure 5.6.3, NI is primarily dependant on fossil fuels for its energy supply, although the proportion of electricity generated from renewables has increased very significantly over the past two decades. There are currently two operational gas-fired power stations in NI (at Ballylumford and Coolkeeragh). As at 2024 the region's third power station at Kilroot is undergoing conversion from coal to gas. All three power stations are outside the Borough. The region is also connected to the Scottish grid and to the Republic of Ireland via interconnectors³.

Figure 5.6.2: NI Transmission Network

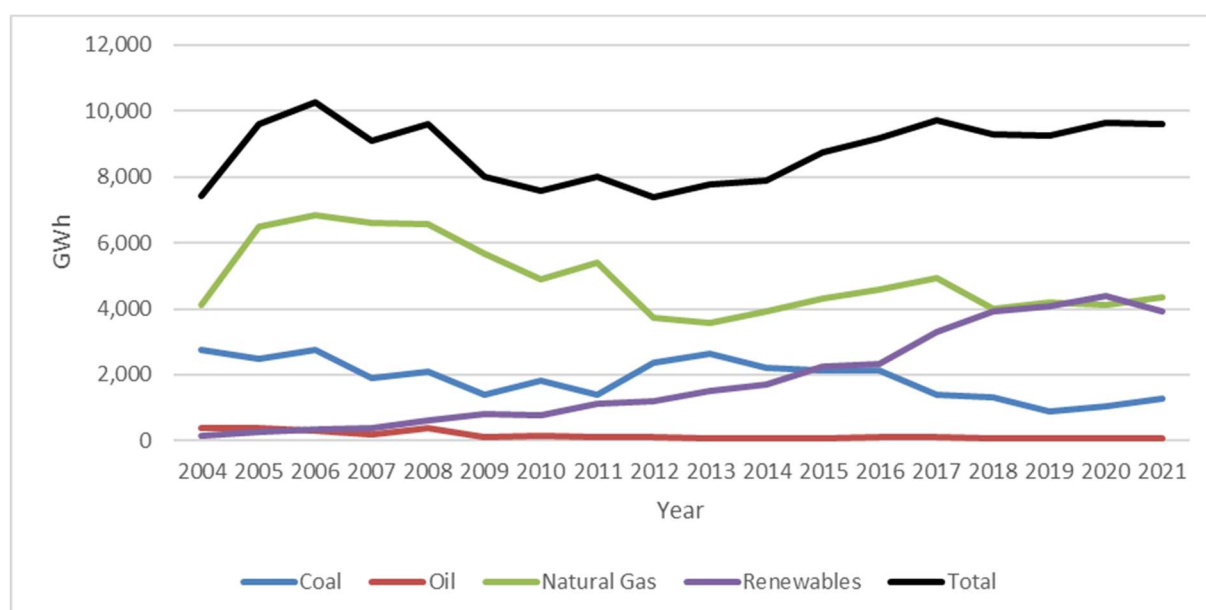


Source: SONI [online] (found at <https://www.soni.ltd.uk/media/documents/SONI-Transmission-Map.pdf> (accessed 01/03/2024))

¹ Local Development Plan- POP Position Paper Public Utilities

² Northern Ireland Electricity: Briefing on Grid Capacity in Northern Ireland in the context of enabling Economic Growth April 2015

³ DETI: Energy in Northern Ireland 2016

Figure 5.6.3: Electricity Generation by Fuel Type in NI 2001-2021

Source: DAERA, Carbon Intensity Indicators 2023 Table2.2

The future security of supply in Northern Ireland is dependent on its capacity to generate, transmit and distribute energy efficiently. SONI has identified that “the transition to low-carbon and renewable energy will have widespread consequences. There will be major changes in how electricity is generated, and in how it is bought, sold, and used. The electricity system will carry more power than ever before and most of that power will be from renewable sources”¹.

Although there is no issue with access to supply in the Borough, regional and local improvements to the network and encouraging innovation could help to futureproof energy supply in the Council area. This would increase its potential for greater capacity and reduce reliance on fossil fuels as well as improving security of supply and competitiveness.

SONI's Transmission Development Plan Northern Ireland 2018-2027 describes the South and East Planning Area as having strong high capacity 275 kV infrastructure, with significant spare capacity for generation and demand. The development of the transmission network in the area is characterised by the need to meet increasing demand and improve system resilience and flexibility. The Transmission Development Plan includes 27 proposed projects in the South and East Planning Area, but none are located within the Borough.

The DfE's publication 'Energy in Northern Ireland 2020' estimates that for each year in the three year period 2016-2018 in Northern Ireland, an annual average of around £1billion in turnover and 5,900 full time equivalent jobs were generated directly by businesses active in the low carbon renewable energy economy. This turnover figure includes a significant proportion (32%) from Energy Efficient Products. The total number of energy sector enterprises in Northern Ireland increased from 240 in 2010 to 855 in 2019, a more than three and a half fold increase.

Energy – Natural Gas

The Department for Economy's, Strategic Energy Framework 2010 is committed to extending the natural gas network in the region where it is economic to do so. Natural gas has become the main fuel type for electricity generation in Northern Ireland and it provides central heating for almost half of all households in the Borough².

¹ SONI [online] Strategy 2020 - 25 'Leading the Transition' (found at <https://www.soni.ltd.uk/about/strategy-2025/> (accessed 19/05/2022))

² NISRA Census 2021 MS-E11: Central heating (household based) - (classification 1)

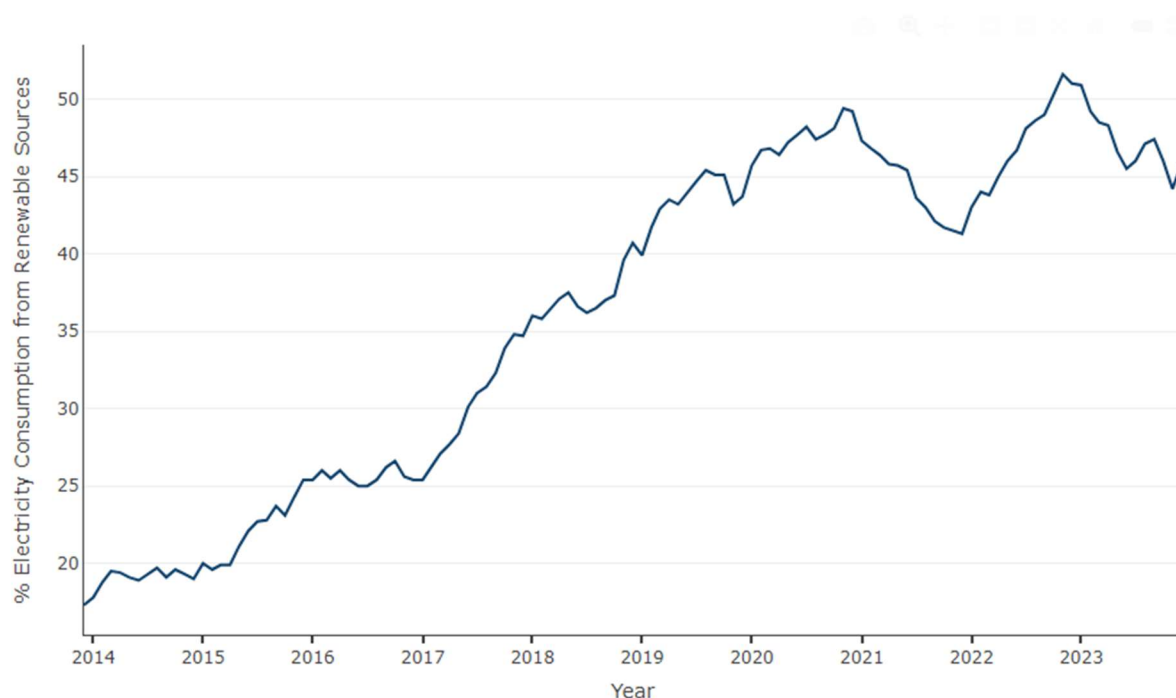
Phoenix Natural Gas is the operator of the licence area which covers Ards and North Down, however the areas in and around Killinchy and the Ards Peninsula have no licensed operator. In 2016, Phoenix Natural Gas obtained approval for the extension of its Natural Gas Licence to provide new gas infrastructure to 13 towns and villages in East Down¹.

Renewable Energy

The Strategic Energy Framework for Northern Ireland set a target to achieve 40% of electrical consumption from renewable sources by 2020. There has been a significant increase in electricity generated from renewable sources since 2001/02 and the Executive's 2020 target was achieved.

For the 12 month period January 2023 to December 2023, 45.8% of total electricity consumption in Northern Ireland was generated from renewable sources located in NI - slightly down from the previous 12 month period. Wind generation accounts for the majority of renewable electricity generation. When wind speeds are significantly above average or significantly below average (which occurred in 2021), this can therefore have a marked effect on the renewable proportion².

Figure 5.6.4: Electricity Consumption from Renewable Sources - Rolling 12 month average to December 2023



Source: DfE (2024) Electricity Consumption and Renewable Generation in Northern Ireland January 2023 to December 2023

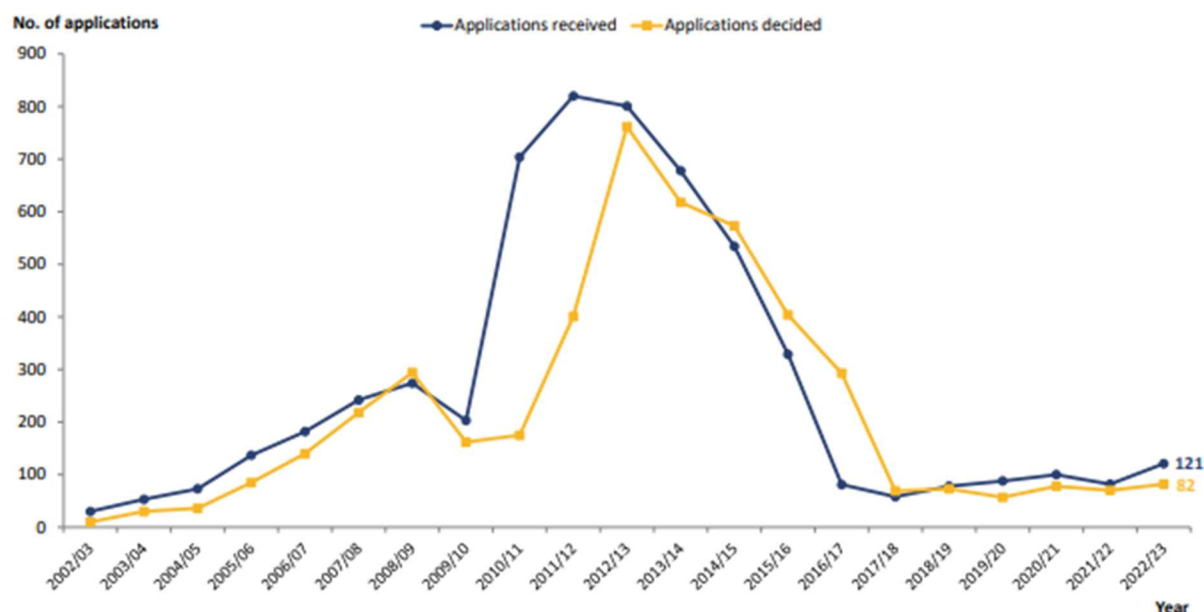
The volume of non-wind renewable generation has remained relatively stable in recent years with 571 GWh generated in the 12 months ending December 2023.

There has been a general decline in the number of renewables applications in Northern Ireland since 2010 (Figure 5.6.5). The downward trend is reflected in the Borough, where four of renewable energy applications were determined in 2021-22 and 2022-23. The decrease in renewable energy applications can be largely attributed to the reduction of government incentives for certain types of renewables development.

¹ Phoenix Natural Gas: Gas to East Down Information Booklet (found at <https://www.phoenixnaturalgas.com/assets/documents/Gas-to-East-Down-booklet.pdf>)

² DfE (2024) Electricity Consumption and Renewable Generation in Northern Ireland January 2023 to December 2023

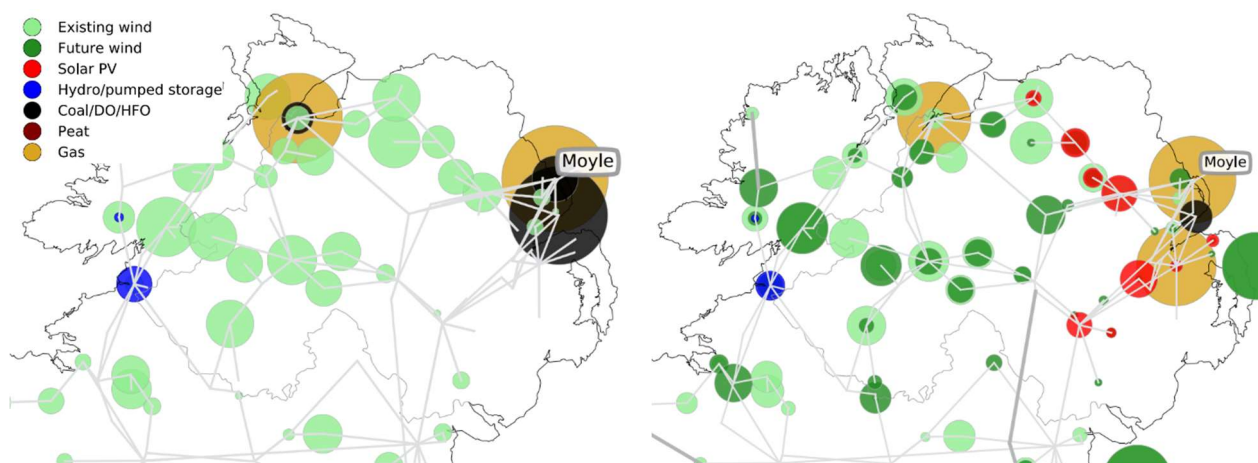
Figure 5.6.5: Renewable Energy applications, annually, 2002/03 to 2022/23



Source: NISRA (2023) Northern Ireland Planning Statistics Annual Statistical Bulletin 2022/23 April 2022 to March 2023

In its 'Shaping our Electricity Future Roadmap', SONI has identified the existing and planned generation infrastructure within NI. Figure 5.6.6 shows an excerpt from this report which identifies potential solar and wind energy proposals in the Borough.

Figure 5.6.6: SONI Generation Spatial Distribution 2020 and (projected) 2030.

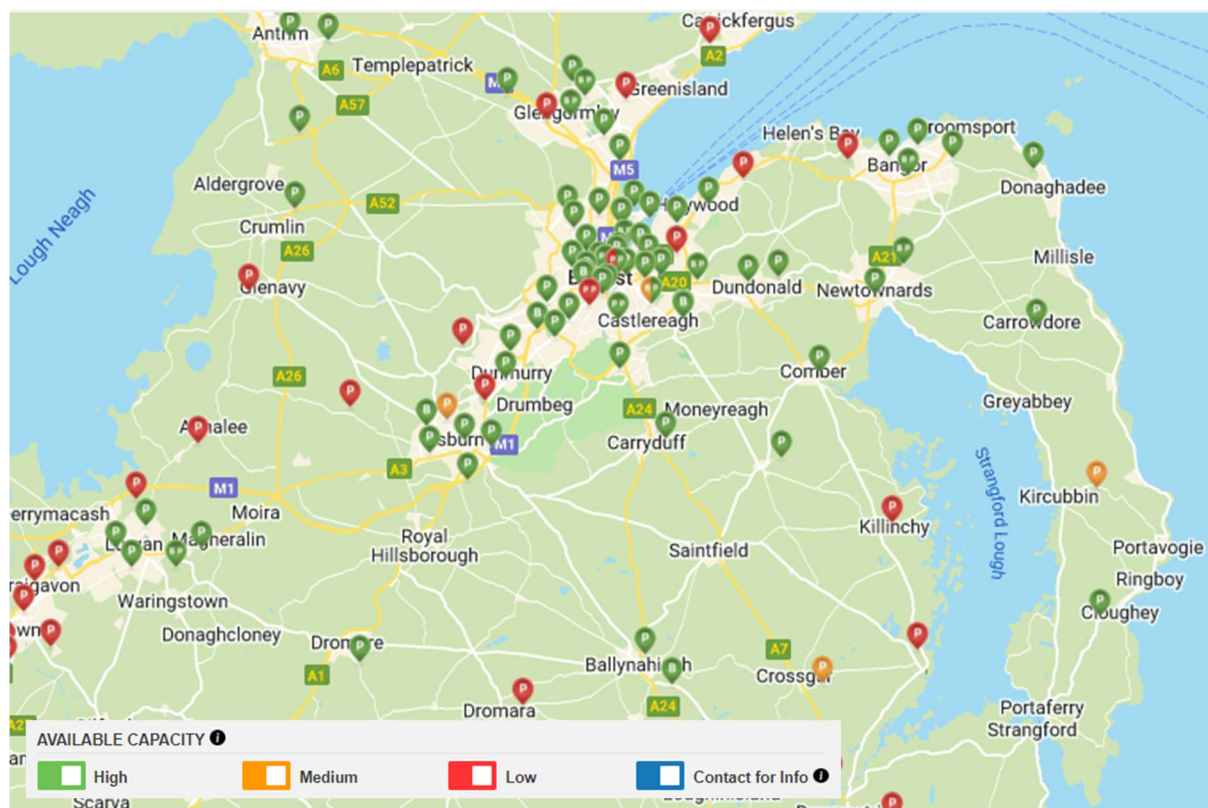


Source: SONI (2022) Technical Report on Shaping our Electricity Future p11.

Single turbines are the most prevalent type of renewable energy in the Borough. It is noted that wind speeds are particularly favourable around the Ards Peninsula, although preservation of landscape and seascape character, especially within the Strangford and Lecale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, is a constraint on wind energy development.

The available capacity of the electricity network within the Borough is essential to support the growth of small-scale renewable generation in the future. NIE's Network Capacity Map (Figure 5.6.7) indicates that at present, there is potential for connection of additional generation in some parts of the Borough.

Figure 5.6.7: NIE 11kv Network Capacity



Source: Northern Ireland Electricity [online] Network Capacity Map (found at <https://www.nienetwrks.co.uk/connections/capacity-map> [accessed 01/03/2024])

The NI Business Plan, 'Investing for the Future 2017-2024', states that planned investment will be taking place to improve network assets across the region which could see improvements in the Borough¹.

The Renewable Integration Development Plan, Network 25 and Generation Cluster Infrastructure projects will see improvements within the region to enable the connection of renewables. However, there are no planned projects within the Borough that could enable commercial scale connection of renewables².

The Offshore Renewable Energy Strategic Action Plan 2012-2020 identified locations that would potentially be suitable for appropriate offshore renewable energy projects in NI. An area of offshore wind resource was identified off the Borough's east coast and two areas of tidal resource were identified, one at the mouth of Strangford Lough and one east of the Copeland Islands³. The SeaGen, the first large scale commercial tidal stream generator of its kind in the world, was installed in Strangford Lough in 2008. Although it was successful, generating sufficient power to supply up to 1,500 homes annually, it was decommissioned in 2017 in accordance with the terms of its licence. Strangford Lough continues to be a focal point for tidal turbine research, with small-scale test projects being carried out by Queen's University and Minesto.^{4,5}

¹ Northern Ireland Electricity Networks (2017) Investing in the Future, NIE Networks summary business plans 2017-2024

² Renewable Integration Status Report, 2016

³ Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's Local Development Plan Preparatory Studies Paper 8: The Coast February 2017

⁴ MarineEnergy.biz TTT turbines spin back to Strangford Lough flows (found at <https://marineenergy.biz/2018/07/04/ttt-turbines-spin-back-to-strangford-lough-flows/>)

⁵ Minesto: Strangford Lough Test and Demonstration Site (found at <https://minesto.com/projects/strangford-lough>)

Waste Management

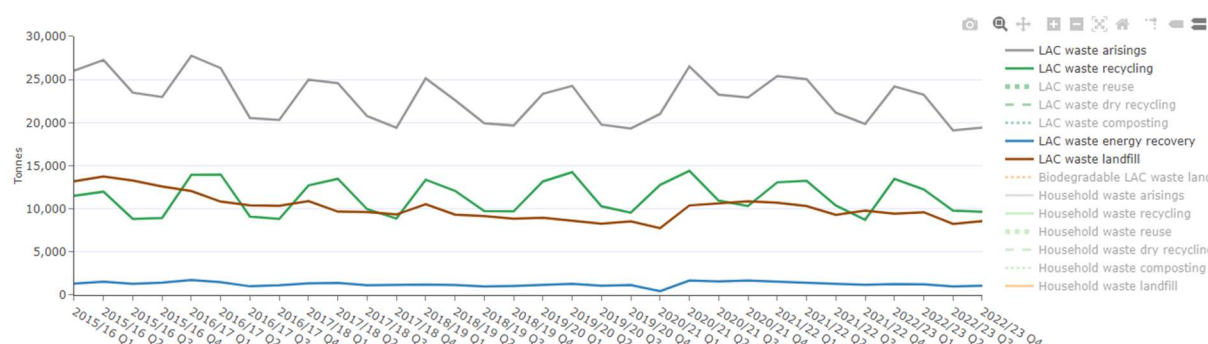
The Northern Ireland Waste Management Strategy supports sustainable development, the waste management hierarchy and resource efficiency. At its core is to reduce waste; and then reuse, recycle or recover, before any consideration of landfilling.

The Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 introduces a requirement for the Department to ensure that at least 70% of waste is recycled by 2030. The draft Green Growth Strategy sets out that *“we must utilise better what we think of as waste through a strong circular economy, an economy where we move from ‘make, use, dispose’ to one where we keep resources in use for as long as possible, where waste is eliminated, resources are circulated and nature regenerated”*.

Ards and North Down is part of the ARC21 Waste Management Group (WMG), which comprises of six Councils and is responsible for the preparing, monitoring and reviewing of the group’s Waste Management Plan. ARC21 account for 59% of the region’s population, making it NI’s largest WMG.

The Council reports on a number of Statutory Indicators including waste within its Performance Improvement Plan. In 2017/18, the Council set a target to increase recycling within the Borough to 55% by 2020¹. Data from the Northern Ireland local authority collected municipal waste management statistics suggest that this target has not yet been consistently met.

Figure 5.6.8: Collected Waste Statistics for Ards and North Down Borough 2015-2023



Source: Northern Ireland Local Authority Collected Waste Statistics (online) (found at <https://datavis.nisra.gov.uk/daera/northern-ireland-waste-management-statistics.html>) (accessed 01/03/2024)

The average household waste dry recycling and composting rate (%) for Ards and North Down across the four quarters in the 2021-22 period was 48% and for the 2022-23 period was 51%. In the 2019-2020 period the target was almost reached (54%).

Over the period April 2020 to March 2023, approximately 42% of the Borough’s waste was sent to landfill and 6% was sent for energy recovery².

There are no active landfill sites for household waste within the Borough. At present waste produced in Ards and North Down is sent to landfill in Scotland. The Council has Waste Recycling Centres located at Balloo, Ballygowan, Comber, Donaghadee, Holywood, Kircubbin, Millisle, Newtownards and Portaferry³.

Derelict/Contaminated Land

The Land Use Database held by the NIEA provides a record of approximately 14,000 sites that have had previous industrial land use(s). This database was originally based on historic

¹ Ards and North Down Performance Improvement Plan 2017/2018

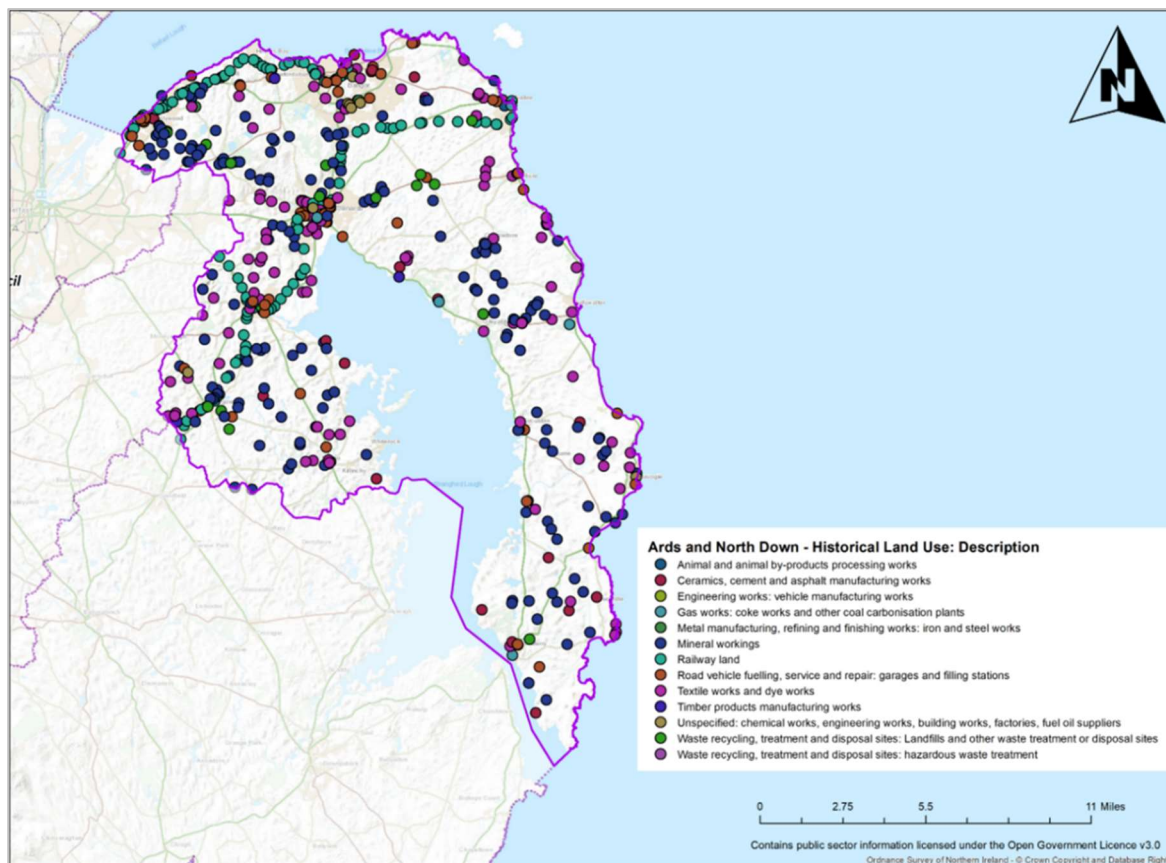
² DAERA (online) Northern Ireland local authority collected municipal waste management statistics time series dataset (found at <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/northern-ireland-local-authority-collected-municipal-waste-management-statistics>) (accessed 13/3/24))

³ Local Development Plan- POP Position Paper Public Utilities

maps and records dating between 1834 and 1960, but it has been updated with NIEA datasets including Industrial Heritage, Waste Management License, and Pollution Incidents.

The distribution of historic industrial land use entries in the Borough is shown in Figure 5.6.9. Previous activities on these sites may have resulted in soil and groundwater contamination and it is therefore important that any risks associated with contamination are considered as part of the planning and redevelopment process to ensure the development site will be 'suitable for use.'

Figure 5.6.9: Land Use Database –Historical Land Use Records in Ards and North Down Borough



Source: DAERA, Historical Landuse Database

5.6.3 Likely Evolution of the Baseline without the Local Development Plan

In the absence of a new LDP, opportunities to ensure development makes best use of existing utility infrastructure and development may be missed. In terms of providing efficient and adequate material assets, achieving sustainable development could become increasingly difficult without an up to date spatial approach to planning. Development may not be feasible, or it could be constrained if existing infrastructure is deficient or absent. Without a spatial approach, there could be a higher risk of negative impacts on rural areas and inappropriate energy projects.

5.6.4 Key Sustainability Issues for Material Assets

- Improving infrastructure across rural areas for the needs of rural communities, rural services and rural businesses is vital to support rural enterprise and economic activity.
- Renewable energy applications have substantially decreased since 2015. There is currently an absence of financial incentives for renewable projects and this may be influencing rates of development.

- Onshore wind has dominated renewable energy generation, but a diversity of technologies will be needed for a sustainable energy mix, e.g. solar, tidal, biomass, hydroelectric, anaerobic digestion.
- Support for enabling renewables and diversification within the market is required to help meet commitments of the Climate Change Act.
- Grid reinforcement is required to facilitate the growth of renewable energy generation.
- It is important to support wind and other renewable energy, but this should be balanced with safeguarding areas of particular scenic/environmental value.
- The marine area has potential to support wave/tidal energy projects, however land-based infrastructure will be required to connect offshore development to the transmission network.
- The capacity and availability of infrastructure in respect of water, waste and sewage is key in identifying the location of future housing and employment land.
- Growing a circular economy and implementing the waste hierarchy that advocates prevention, and reuse of waste before recycling are key elements within DAERA's draft Green Growth and draft Environment Strategies.
- The impact of existing or proposed waste management facilities should be considered when zoning land for development.
- A spatial approach to the provision of waste management facilities based upon the proximity principle is recommended to minimise the environmental impact and cost of waste transport.
- Derelict/contaminated land sites may be available for appropriate reuse, but it is important that any risks associated with contamination are considered and addressed as part of the planning and redevelopment process.

5.7 Physical Resources

5.7.1 Review of Policies, Plans, Programmes and Strategies

The physical resources sustainability theme covers minerals, earth science sites, geothermal energy, land and soil. Physical resources provide us with the building blocks we need for everyday life, but are mostly finite in their supply. Our protection of physical resources can be a clear indicator of how sustainable our society is.

The sustainable management of physical resources is a common theme of regional, strategic and subject planning policy. The need to safeguard sufficient land to provide physical resources into the future is evident. Land is recognised as multifunctional, in that it can act as a connective wildlife corridor; provide amenity value, building resources, adaptation for climate change; remove water and soil pollution; support biodiversity and create landscape and seascape character. Adequate amounts of land are required to deliver all of these functions. Some physical resources such as soil can become so contaminated from pollution that they no longer adequately function.

The overarching aims of current government policy and programmes are sustainable development and sustainable land management, as these will underpin sustainable economic growth and a sustainable energy supply. Current policy strives to ensure that physical resources are safeguarded for the future and that sufficient local supplies are available. The Department for Economy (DfE) recognises that the concept of sustainability is different within the industry because reserves are finite, but the industry can still play a part in the circular economy and the principles of the waste management hierarchy¹. The Draft Green Growth Strategy considers that “[NI must move from] an economy where we move from ‘make, use, dispose’ to one where we keep resources in use for as long as possible, where waste is eliminated, resources are circulated and nature regenerated”. By keeping technical and natural materials in circulation for longer at their highest value, we retain their embodied carbon and consequently reduce GHG emissions. NI also has a Geodiversity Charter that aims to inform decision makers of the importance of geodiversity to the economy and the environment, as part of the UK Geodiversity Action Plan.

The SPPS aims to minimise the impacts from the minerals industry on local communities and the environment. This is expected through sustainable minerals development that carefully considers impacts on the local area and includes the safe restoration of sites with an appropriate reuse. In Northern Ireland, older mineral workings from the 1970s and 1980s had little emphasis placed on managing their environmental impacts or restoration. Recent changes to planning legislation through the Planning Act (NI) 2011, enables Councils to review old mineral permissions sites (ROMP sites). However, a further Order is needed before Councils can begin this review.

The Council’s Corporate Plan 2024-2028 has the vision of ‘A Sustainable Borough’ and includes “a vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors” among its strategic outcomes.

The Council’s Community Plan, ‘*The Big Plan*’ recognises that there are competing interactions for physical space and that there is a need to manage the physical environment (natural and built) to ensure that natural spaces are protected and potentially competing elements work in harmony.

5.7.2 Baseline Information

A baseline of information has also been presented in the LDP Position Paper on Minerals. This topic also overlaps with the Housing, Material Assets, Climate Change, Natural Resources and Landscape sections of this scoping report.

¹ Department for the Economy Information note on Minerals, Geothermal Energy, Groundwater and Geohazards 2017

Minerals

The DfE's LDP consultation response on Minerals¹ indicates that while four operators submitted minerals returns for the annual minerals statement in 2017, up to six quarries have been operational in Ards and North Down in recent years.

The Annual Minerals Statements² published by the DfE shows that Ards and North Down is the most important contributor to the overall supply of sandstone in NI. Minerals Statements available for the period 2016-2022 demonstrate that 1.8-2.7 million tonnes of sandstone have been produced annually in the Council area, with annual values ranging from £6.7 million in 2016 to £17.6 million in 2021.

The DfE's LDP consultation response on Minerals and the LDP Position Paper on minerals indicate that the type of sandstone currently quarried in the Borough is greywacke. This stone is used for construction aggregate and, because of its high Polished Stone Values (PSV – a measurement of the durability of skid resistance), is in high demand as roadstone both in Northern Ireland and further afield.

The Annual Minerals Statements 2015-present have provided no data in respect of other minerals in Ards and North Down and it is assumed that mineral extraction within the Borough of products other than sandstone is currently minimal.

Census 2011 data showed that the mining and quarrying industry employed 78 people from the Borough and the 2021 data show negligible change (79).

Sandstone extraction is likely to remain a major industry in the council area and materials for infrastructure development will be required both locally and in neighbouring council areas. However, DfE has advised in its consultation response to the POP that there limited supplies of sand and gravel within the Borough and imports from other district Council areas in Northern Ireland will be required to meet local demand for housing construction and other planned development.

No mineral or petroleum prospecting licenses have been issued in the Borough to date however this does not mean that there is no further mineral potential. DfE's response to the consultation on the POP has indicated that, while there is no current mining of high-value minerals, it has occurred in the past in the Council area and the regional Tellus survey 2004-07 has indicated areas where there are elevated occurrences of high value minerals which may attract exploration interest in the future. Modern mineral reconnaissance and exploration techniques have not been applied to the Council area, and it may be possible that undiscovered resources are present.

The Ards & Down Area Plan 2015 has identified 'Areas of Constraint on Minerals Development' (ACMD). The Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 originally proposed a number of ACMDs, however these were excluded prior to the BMAP's adoption in 2014 (since then, BMAP has been quashed). Of the 565km² encompassed by Ards and North Down (including marine areas) 313km² (55%) of the Borough is currently covered by an ACMD designation. The designation of ACMDs may restrict the future opportunities to pursue minerals development.

There were 14 sites identified in Ards and North Down by the Department of the Environment in their 2014 Review of Old Mineral Permissions (ROMP), equating to 2.9% of the total number of ROMP sites in NI (470) (see Figure 5.7.1). The majority of these (10) were for the extraction of grit, alongside one site for sand/grit and two for sandstone. The 'Minerals' Position Paper states that the ROMP enables a mechanism to review all existing planning conditions on extant mineral planning permissions, providing an important opportunity to secure improved operating and environmental standards within the quarrying

¹ Department for Economy - Ards and North Down Preferred Options Paper: Pre-Consultation Comments

² Department for the Economy Annual Minerals Statements (online) (found at <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/annual-minerals-statements> (accessed 01/03/2024))

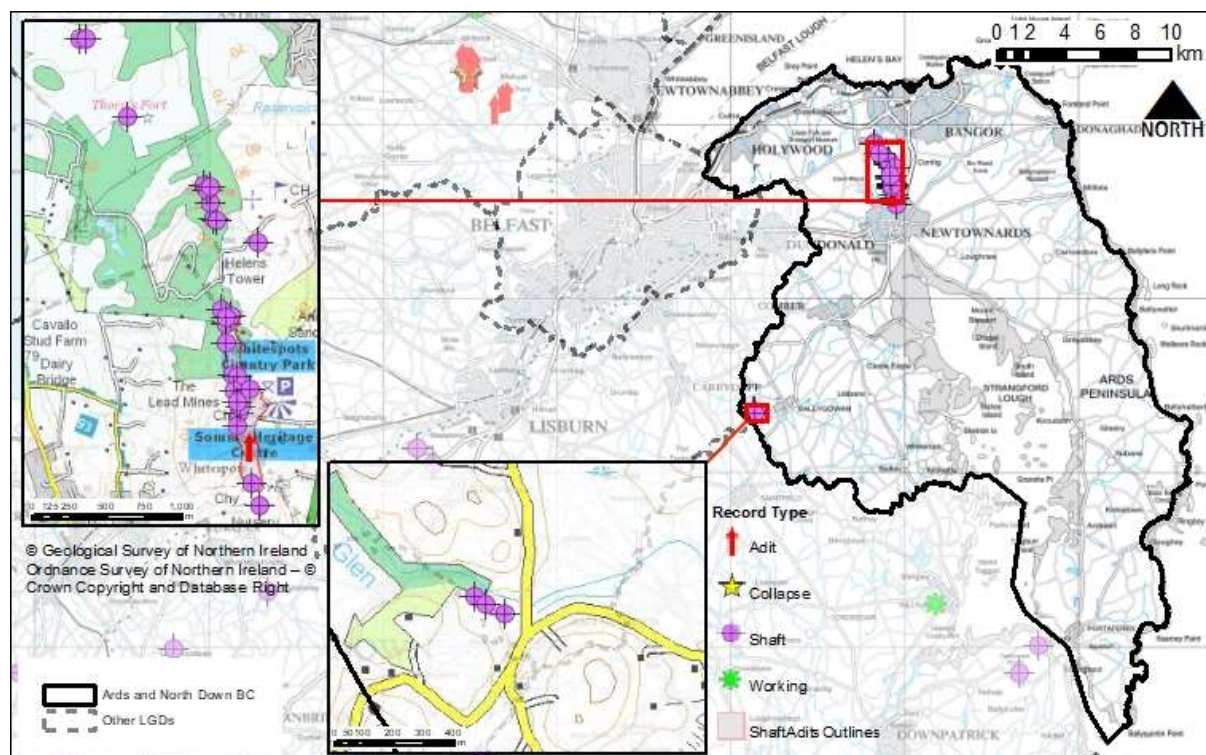
industry. However, action on the ROMP has been delayed due to the need for the Department of Infrastructure to produce further legislation.

The 'Minerals' Position Paper notes that a former quarry at Scrabo is now a National Nature Reserve and a former limestone quarry at Castle Espie is now a bird reserve and forms part of the Strangford Lough Ramsar site. In the future, it may be feasible to restore more of these sites for recreational/educational use and/or as green/blue infrastructure.

The Geological Survey of Northern Ireland (GSNI) maintains a database of former mine workings, shafts and adits and has an associated webviewer¹. This database shows that in the 1800s lead and coal were prospected and mined for at two locations within the Borough; west of Conlig and Ballygowan. A recently completed geodiversity audit of the Borough² has noted that the abandoned mine site at Whitespots-Conlig has 'superb geology' that should be developed as a tourist attraction. However, it also recognises that the current state of the site means that it would take substantial work to ensure that the site is safe for visitors to enjoy.

Land within the vicinity of former mine workings may be at risk of instability and subsidence, which should be taken in to consideration when planning new development. The DfE's LDP consultation response on Minerals has indicated that contaminated land issues exist within some areas of Whitespots Country Park as a result of spoil heaps containing high levels of lead and other contaminants.

Figure 5.7.1: Abandoned Mines Hazards in Ards and North Down



Source: GSNI GeoIndex, Spatial NI

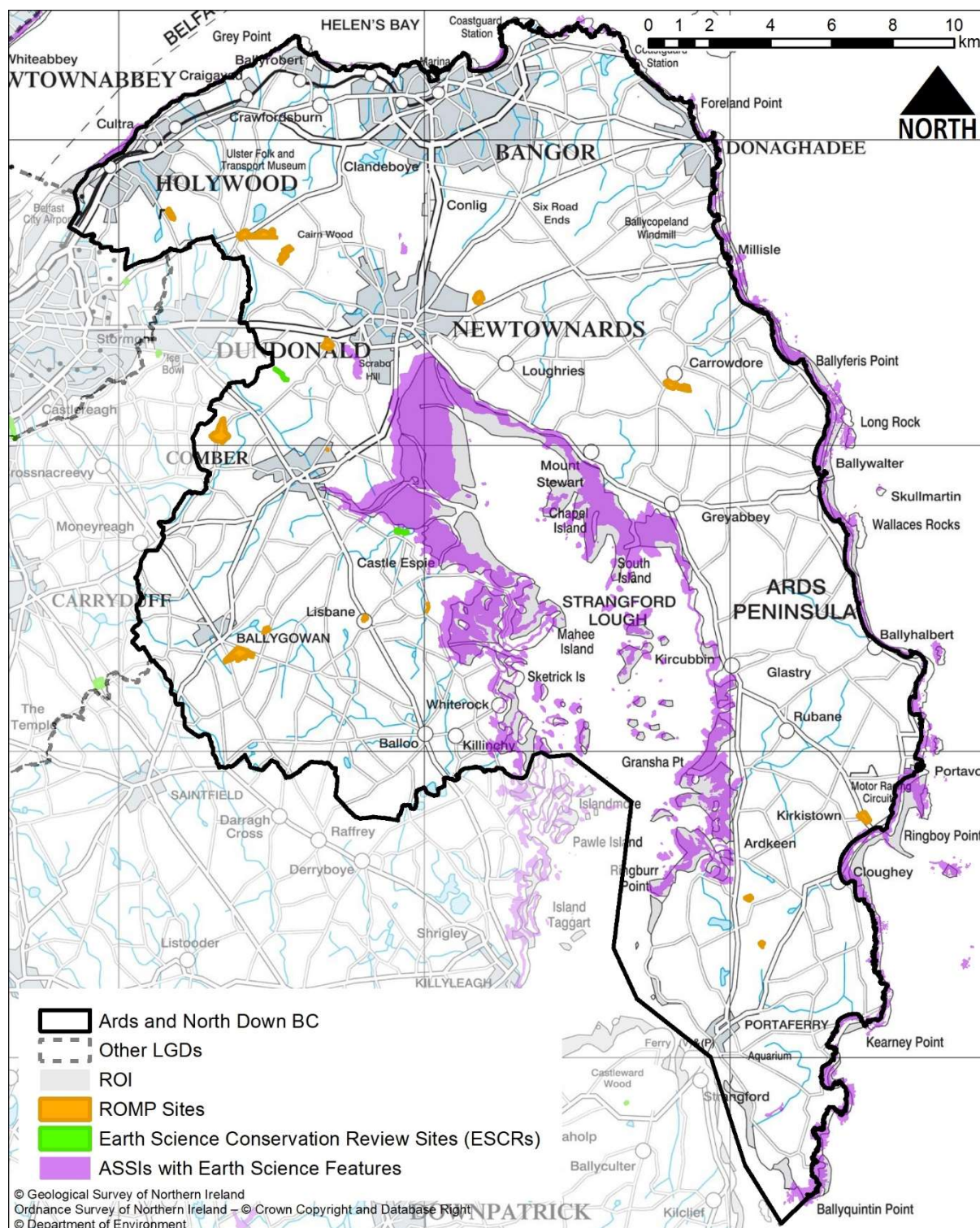
Earth Science

There are two Earth Science Conservation Review sites (ESCRs) in Ards and North Down, at Castle Espie and Ballyrainey (see Figure 5.7.2). These sites are recognised for their geological features.

¹ GSNI Geoindex http://mapapps2.bgs.ac.uk/GSNI_Geoindex/home.html

² Strangford and Lecale AONB Geodiversity Audit - Preliminary Results
https://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/images/assets/COUNCIL_PAPERS_RDC_11.01.18.pdf

Figure 5.7.2: ROMP sites, Earth Science Conservation Sites and geological ASSIs



Source: NIEA Digital Datasets

As discussed further in section 5.11, there are 15 Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs) in Ards and North Down, of which eight have earth science selection features. These sites, shown in Figure 5.7.2, are protected for their geological value, but they can also provide habitat for local wildlife and help to maintain local biodiversity. For example, Outer Ards is an important site for breeding and wintering birds but is also recognised for its structural geology, Ordovician stratigraphy and Caledonian igneous features. Ballyquintin Point hosts an important breeding bird assemblage and also provides a record of sea-level history.

through its raised beach and rock platforms. There are 47 Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCIs) in the Borough, some of which are likely to have a geological importance. There is a direct link between the geology and the geomorphology of an area and its physical character and natural heritage.

The GSNI's Geodiversity Charter (2017)¹, aims to inform decision makers of the importance of geodiversity to the economy and the environment in NI and contributes towards the delivery of the UK Geodiversity Action Plan. The Charter states that *'an understanding of geomorphological processes is vital in managing geological hazards such as landslides, coastal change and flooding, all of which will undoubtedly increase due to climate change.'* It also recognises that *'[the]... soils, nutrients and natural processes that support Northern Ireland's nationally and internationally important habitats and species will also benefit from a better understanding of geodiversity, assisting with environmental management and protection and ultimately providing a safer and healthier place to live.'*

Geodiversity also plays an important role in NI's tourism industry and that of this Council. The Council's Integrated Strategy for Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development 2018-2030 has identified the concept of a vision of a *'Blue Green, Creatively Connected Borough'* and the incorporation of geodiversity into this concept could help to deliver its objectives.

In 2023, the Mourne-Gullion-Strangford Geopark was granted full UNESCO Global Geopark status. It encompasses areas of the Ring of Gullion, Mourne and Strangford and Lecale AONBs, mostly within the neighbouring Newry, Mourne and Down District, however part of the Strangford and Lecale AONB extends into Ards and North Down Borough.

A UNESCO Global Geopark is a single unified geographical area where sites and landscape/seascapes of international geological significance are managed holistically for sustainable tourism, protection and education. Importantly, a UNESCO Global Geopark is not a statutory designation and does not have a negative impact on planning and development, but instead is a complementary designation.

The Mourne-Gullion-Strangford Geopark seeks to highlight the relationships between geology, people and culture, archaeology and built heritage, and biodiversity. Currently, 23 Geosites are identified within the Geopark. A ten year masterplan seeks to further develop the potential of the Geopark and care for, promote and sustain its geology, heritage and cultural assets, while also managing it in a sustainable way.

Geothermal Energy

Naturally occurring heat is stored in ground layers ranging from core depths to shallow layers. It can be used as a source of heating for buildings and possible electricity. This naturally occurring ground heat is called 'geothermal energy'. Geothermal energy is low carbon, renewable (without fluctuation) and is viable with existing technology. It could become a sustainable part of the future energy mix, if investment and the necessary infrastructure were provided. The DfE has advised that the underlying geology of Ards and North Down is such that most of the Council area would be suitable for the deployment of open loop or closed loop systems ground source heat pump systems using shallow aquifer or non-aquifer rocks respectively. DfE advised in its consultation response to the POP that the opportunities for groundwater sourced heating are very good from the Sherwood Sandstone Group in Newtownards, Comber and towards Dundonald. The resources could be used to provide heating for domestic and non-domestic buildings and the potential for energy savings and carbon reductions is significant.

Consideration of the installation and integration of geothermal heating systems is recommended at an early design stage alongside other infrastructure. With further development of the technology, geothermal energy could help to meet the 2020 target of

¹ DfE / Geological Survey of NI: Northern Ireland's Geodiversity Charter - Safeguarding Northern Ireland's Rocks and Landscape

The DfE's LDP consultation response on Minerals has noted that groundwater can be viewed as a resource that requires careful protection. It is as a water source that can be utilised for growth and economic development. Businesses and industry can use groundwater as a private water supply source at their own premises, making significant savings on mains water costs and increasing the resilience of the business. Current groundwater level monitoring suggests that the aquifer is capable of sustaining a significantly higher volume of abstraction. Groundwater is further discussed in section 5.11, but it should be noted that groundwater is used extensively in local agriculture and is vital to sustaining the productivity of the high quality agricultural land in the Borough.

The NI Countryside Survey 2007 found that the main changes in land cover over time were the loss of semi natural habitats to agricultural grassland and rural buildings. The trend for natural land conversion to improved grassland and curtilage was observed in the 1998 survey. Building was mostly on neutral or improved grassland, indicating pressure on agricultural land but semi natural habitat losses were also recorded. The loss of semi natural habitat in lowland areas, where this habitat is already scarce, is a biodiversity issue. The NI Countryside Survey highlighted development pressure for rural land from single rural dwellings.

Rural Housing

The LDP Supplementary Position Paper 6a Housing notes that between January 2010 and January 2016, 677 single houses received planning permission in the countryside. Were this rate to continue, it would result in planning approval for c. 1,680 new rural dwellings over a 15 year Plan period. The paper acknowledges that not all approvals may be built, but that if current building rates were extrapolated it may result in up to 1,305 new houses in the countryside.

Renewable Energy

In comparison with some other LGDs, Ards and North Down does not experience as much pressure on land use from wind and other renewables. As discussed in chapter 5.6 and in the Public Utilities LDP Position Paper, there are no commercial wind farms currently operating in the Borough. There is, however, one solar farm, at Carrowdore, which covers 27 acres¹. Published planning statistics have indicated that around 83 single wind turbines received planning approval over the period 2002-18. It has not been possible to obtain data on how many of the approved single turbines have actually been constructed and are operational. However, as has been discussed in the Public Utilities Position Paper, obtaining a connection to the grid has been a constraint to development of renewables.

Soil

Soil quality is not currently protected under any specific legislation in NI, but soil is a fundamental physical resource. It acts as a store for – and source of – gases like oxygen, nitrogen and carbon dioxide. It also filters water and provides a base for biodiversity and raw materials. A properly functioning soil should be less vulnerable to erosion and can reduce flooding, filter pollution and store essential nutrients that can support plants and animals. Development can affect soil quality through pollution and erosion. Future changes to the climate will have significant impacts on our soils. Increased seasonal aridity and wetness poses risk to soils, which are vital to a healthy environment².

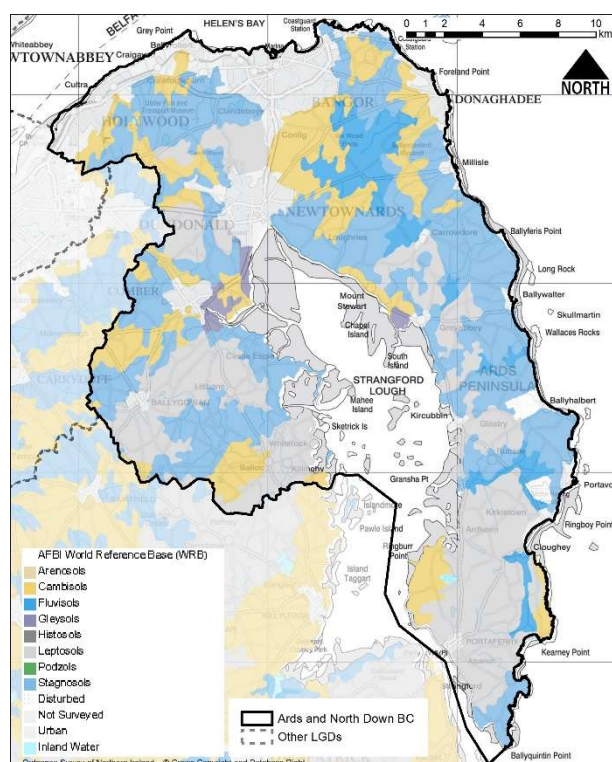
The soils within the Comber, Greyabbey and Newtownards areas are derived from red sandstones and gravel, meaning they are light and free-draining. This, combined with the local climate, which is warmer than other parts of NI³, has given the area a unique advantage in terms of cultivation. The growing season can start before other regions in NI and can also be harvested earlier than anywhere else. These has led to New Season Comber Potatoes / Comber Earlies being one of only a handful of products from NI to be granted Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) status under European law.

¹ BBC - Large solar farm gets green light in County Down – Published 5 February 2014

² CIWEM's priorities for the second cycle of the National Adaptation Programme (NAP) under the Climate Change Act 2008.

³ Council Regulation (EC) No 510/2006 on protected geographical indications and protected designations of origin "New Season Comber Potatoes/Comber Earlies"

Figure 5.7.4: Soils Map of Ards and North Down



Source: AFBI NI / UKSO Soils Map Viewer¹

The dominant soil types in the Borough are:
Fluvisols – soils that are influenced by water (includes peat).

Stagnosols – Soils with stagnating water

Gleysols – soils that are influenced by groundwater

Leptosols – Shallow soil over bedrock, calcareous material or a deeper soil that is gravelly or stony.

Cambisols – relatively young soils, with little or no profile development.

5.7.3 Likely Evolution of the Baseline without the Local Development Plan

In the absence of a new plan, there could be less opportunity to spatially plan and sustainably manage existing and future physical resources so that reserves are safeguarded, and environmental damage avoided. It may become more difficult to respond to and manage development pressures on the Borough's physical resources and to avoid inappropriate development, pollution and erosion.

5.7.4 Key Sustainability Issues for Physical Resources

- Minerals, including valuable minerals, are an important natural resource and their responsible exploitation is supported by Government. The minerals industry makes an essential contribution to the Northern Ireland economy and to quality of life, providing primary minerals for construction and as a valued provider of jobs and employment, particularly in rural areas.
- In comparison with other Councils, Ards and North Down has low quantities of mineral extraction. However, materials that are extracted are in high demand for road construction.
- There are limited supplies of sand and gravel within the Borough area and imports from other Council areas in NI will be required to meet local demand for housing and other planned development.
- While ACMD protect valuable and vulnerable landscapes/seascapes and environments, they can also restrict economic development.
- Available, workable mineral resources which are of economic or conservation value should be safeguarded and not be allowed to become constrained by other forms of development.

¹ UK Soil Observatory World Reference Base, Reference Soil Groups for NI
<http://mapapps2.bgs.ac.uk/ukso/home.html?layer=AFBIWRB>

- The Borough has two areas of former mining activity and one has potential for development as a destination.
- Land within the vicinity of former mine workings may be at risk of instability and subsidence.
- Land surrounding former mine workings may have contaminated land issues.
- The ROMPS may provide an opportunity to improve operating and environmental standards within the quarrying industry.
- The Mourne Gullion Strangford UNESCO Global Geopark, ratified in 2023, includes part of the Strangford and Lecale AONB, which also extends into the Borough. There may be opportunities for partnership working with NMDDC for sustainable growth of the Geopark and responsible tourism, conservation, and education which recognises the connections between geological heritage and the broader spectrum of the area's natural, cultural, and intangible heritage.
- High quality agricultural land is a valuable and finite resource. Within the Plan area, there are areas of agricultural land comprising some of the best and most versatile in NI.
- Soil quality across the Council should be protected using effective conservation measures, due to a lack of specific legislation protecting soils at a regional or local level.

5.8 Transport and Accessibility

5.8.1 Review of Policies, Plans, Programmes and Strategies

Overarching regional planning policy for transport aims to deliver a balanced approach to transport infrastructure. Integral to this is an underlying drive to improve transport connectivity, accessibility, efficiency and social inclusivity. Regional policy also aims to reduce our carbon footprint and mitigate and adapt to climate change whilst improving air quality. Some measures to achieve this are directly linked to transport and include reducing emissions from transport, improving energy efficiency and enabling the revocation of Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs).

Encouraging people to use public transport and to consider active travel options like walking and cycling is key to achieving regional policy outcomes. This is reflected in the policy objectives for transport in the SPPS along with objectives for adequate parking facilities and road safety. The LDP will be fundamental to promoting and enabling sustainable transport, but a behavioural shift within society is also required, both at home and in the workplace.

The PfG includes commitments to investing in and improving public infrastructure; this includes road, rail and accessible public transport.

In 2020, DfI published The Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan (BMTP) Transport Study¹ to help inform the LDP process ahead of the production of a new BMTP. A Local Transport Study (LTS) for the Ards and North Down Borough Council area is included as Annex F of this study. The LTS sets out an objective evidence-based assessment of current and future transport issues in the context of the Council's growth ambitions.

The Council's Integrated Strategy for Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development includes increasing the use of public transport and promoting active travel as key objectives. It advocates a sustainable transport strategy that promotes the use of public transport and active travel options. It aims to seek increased investment with public transport providers and government for infrastructure work, including services that are more frequent, new routes, and park and ride/share facilities. The strategy also highlights the potential of the future expansion of existing greenways.

The Council's Corporate Plan 2024-2028 has the vision of 'A Sustainable Borough' and includes an engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment" and "opportunities for people to be active and healthy" among its strategic outcomes.

In the Council's Community Plan, '*The Big Plan*', the vision refers to, 'a vibrant, connected, healthy, safe and prosperous place to be' while several of the Plan's outcomes are based on aspirations directly linked to ensuring people can access adequate transport links and appropriate services, including green infrastructure with walking and cycling options. Outcomes of the Plan such as people enjoying 'good health and wellbeing', and people benefitting from 'access to a well-managed sustainable environment', would support provision of a more varied transport system that enables higher levels of accessibility to active and sustainable travel that can help to connect people and places.

5.8.2 Baseline Information

Relevant baseline information for Transport and Accessibility is presented in the Local Development Plan Position Papers on Transportation and Environmental Resilience. Data have also been sourced from NISRA and the DfI. This topic overlaps with the Health and Well-being, Strengthening Society, Air Quality, Climate Change, Natural Resources and Landscape sections of this report.

¹ Department for Infrastructure (2020) The Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan (BMTP) Transport Study October 2020

Transport Emissions

In Northern Ireland (NI), the transport sector is the second biggest emitter of Greenhouse Gases (GHGs) and contributed 16% of total GHG emissions in 2021 (a reduction from 22% in 2018)¹. Emissions are a by-product from the burning of fossil fuels. While the government target is to reduce GHG emissions by 50% on 1990 levels by 2025, the transport sector has not shown a declining trend in spite of increasingly efficient vehicles (further discussed in section 5.10). Reductions could be achieved through the planning of transport routes that enable shorter journeys and the integration of public transport and active travel options.

Nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) is part of a group of gaseous air pollutants produced as a result of road traffic and other fossil fuel combustion processes which can irritate the lungs and lower resistance to respiratory infections such as influenza². In NI, it is measured across 15 automatically managed sites and based on an annual mean limit (40µg/m³), set by the UK Air Quality Strategy, exceedances were recorded at a quarter of sites³, although none of these are located in the Council area. Road transport also contributes to levels of airborne particulate matter (PM₁₀) which can particularly affect people with heart and lung issues.

Transport Routes

There are a number of protected routes across the Council area including the A2 – Belfast to Bangor, the A20 – Belfast to Newtownards, the A21 – Bangor to Ballygowan (via Newtownards), and the A48 – Newtownards to Donaghadee. The A20 and A21 are also part of the Regional Strategic Transport Network⁴. The Council area has the fourth highest amount of dual carriageway present (26.4km), which is located in the north of the Borough but it also has the fifth lowest amount of single carriageway relative to other Council areas. Likewise, there are a low number of unclassified, C and B roads; and no motorway is present⁵. The Ards Peninsula has an absence of protected routes and main links. Its ‘rural nature’⁶ may increase local reliance on cars for travel, and as the peninsula is ‘not well served by public transport’⁷.

Car Ownership

The Census 2021⁸ found that 85% of households in the Council Area had access to one or more vehicles, with 32% of households having 2 or more cars or vans available. There remains a significant number of households (15%) without access to any vehicle and which are therefore reliant on public transport, active travel and lift shares. The level of car ownership may be exacerbated by the rural nature of the Ards Peninsula and the lack of access in some areas to public transport options. Although all towns in the Borough have had pedestrian accessibility improved, they remain ‘dominated by the existing road network’⁹.

Travel to Work/Study

The BMTP Local Transport Study for Ards and North Down found that, for journeys to work, the use of sustainable modes in ANDBC is below the NI average, with only 13% walking, cycling or using public transport compared to 16% across NI. However, for short journeys (less than 2km) 36% use active modes (walking and cycling) in ANDBC, and this is the same as the NI average.

For journeys to education, the use of sustainable modes in ANDBC is less than the NI average, with 43% walking, cycling or using public transport compared to 52% across NI.

¹ DAERA 2023: Northern Ireland Greenhouse Gas Inventory 1990-2021 Statistical Bulletin

² DAERA: Northern Ireland Environmental Statistics Report May 2019

³ DAERA (2018): Northern Ireland Environmental Statistics Report Issue 10

⁴ Ards and North Down Borough Council Local Development Plan – POP Position Paper Transportation

⁵ NINIS: Travel and Transport – Road Lengths (administrative geographies)

⁶ Ards and North Down Borough Council Local Development Plan – POP Position Paper Environmental Resilience

⁷ Ards and North Down Borough Council Local Development Plan – POP Position Paper Transportation

⁸ NISRA Census 2021 MS-E10 ‘Car or van availability’ (found at

https://build.nisra.gov.uk/en/custom/data?d=HOUSEHOLD&v=LG14&v=HH_CAR_VAN_TC5) (accessed 01/03/24))

⁹ Ards and North Down Borough Council Local Development Plan – POP Position Paper Transportation

For short journeys (less than 2km) 43% use active modes, which is similar to the NI average of 44%. However, 52% of journeys to work of less than 2km are made by car.

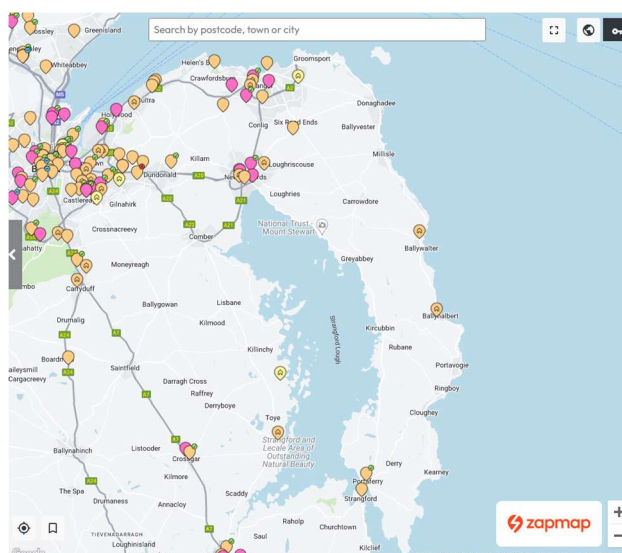
Comparing journeys to education and work presents a stark contrast in terms of use of public transport. Public transport accounts for 25% of journeys to education, but only 6% to work. It is notable that 43% of shortest (less than 2km) education journeys are made by public transport whilst by far the greatest share is car passenger (50%).

Electric Vehicles

Electric vehicles emit fewer GHG emissions than petrol or diesel and are becoming more common. The UK Department of Transport has mandated that 80% of new cars and 70% of new vans sold in Great Britain will be zero emission by 2030, increasing to 100% by 2035. The Energy Strategy for NI, published in 2021, recognises that in advance of sale of new petrol and diesel cars being phased out there is a need to support the transition to electric vehicles and that a significant increase public and private charging points will be required.

The POP Position Paper identified seven charging points in the Borough; the majority of these being located in the Belfast to Bangor area. Figure 5.8.1 shows the current (March 2024) distribution of public access vehicle charge points in 2024. While the number of charging points has increased, their distribution remains limited in the east of the Council area.

Figure 5.8.1: Distribution of Public Access Vehicle Charge Points



Source: Zapmap (online) Found at <https://www.zap-map.com/live/> (accessed 01/03/2024)

Car Parking and Park and Ride/Share facilities

Car parking provision is important to help enable car sharing arrangements and access to public transport services for general travel and for key tourism destinations. Since 2015, the Council has been responsible for all aspects relating to management, operation and maintenance of off street public car parks within the Borough. The Council manages 68 car parks with approximately 5000 car parking spaces¹. The DfI has responsibility for on street parking for which time restrictions apply and there are also a number of parking areas which are privately owned.

Planning for parking needs to take account of public transport and walking and cycling networks. The Council's Draft Parking Strategy and Action Plan notes that Park and Ride provision is the responsibility of Translink and DfI and that the extant Park and Ride facilities

¹ Ards and North Down Borough Council (2019) draft Parking Strategy and Action Plan (found at <https://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/resident/car-parking/car-parking-strategy> (accessed 01/03/2024))

in Bangor and Holywood are full every working day. It adds that that Council needs to be involved in decisions and planning around Park and Ride.

DfI's LTS has identified that park and ride facilities may have a role to play in encouraging use of public transport, particularly for journeys to Belfast, in Bangor, Newtownards, Holywood, Comber and Donaghadee, and at strategic locations along the routes. 'Park and Share' has a complementary role in increasing vehicle occupancy. The LTS concludes that Town Centre Parking Strategies that provide for demand for long and short stay parking at locations that reduce town centre congestion will be required in Bangor, Newtownards, Holywood, Comber and Donaghadee.

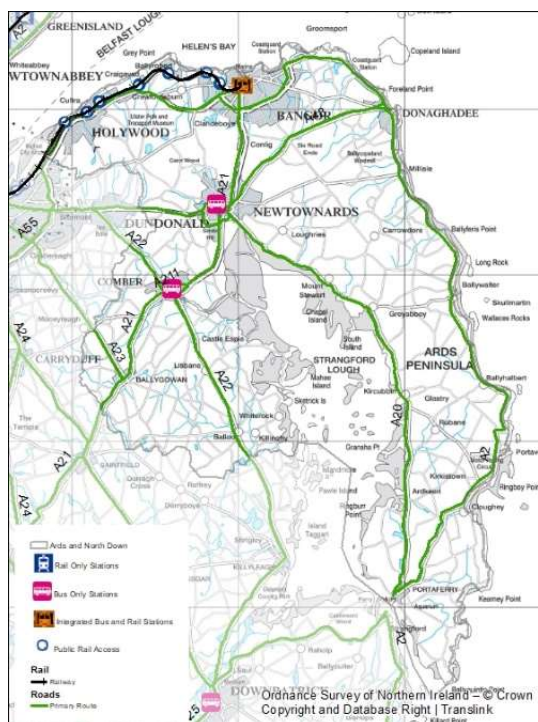
Ferry Transport

Strangford Lough is a prominent natural feature within the Council area. To travel between Portaferry, which is located at the tip of the Ards Peninsula within the Council area and Strangford, it takes approximately 90 minutes by car, or eight minutes by the ferry. A regular ferry service runs throughout the year with capacity for up to 27 cars and 260 passengers. Annually the ferry is used by around 550,000 passengers and 180,000 vehicles¹. It is an important transport link in the local economy, carrying commuters, schoolchildren as well as tourists.

Public Transport

The Borough benefits from both bus and rail services. There is an integrated station in Bangor with a rail connection to Belfast. Two other bus stations are located in Newtownards and Comber. Ulsterbus and Belfast Metro Services serve the Borough from the main stations out to most towns, villages and small settlements. Rural areas across the Borough are less accessible by public transport and particularly the southern half of the Ards Peninsula². Ards and North Down Borough are working on a Community Trails project in the Ards Peninsula area to help connect communities to facilities, services and open/green spaces using walking and cycling routes³.

Figure 5.8.2 Primary Transport Links in Ards and North Down



Source: Spatial NI

¹ The Irish News, 10th March 2016 "Strangford ferry costs an average of £1.5m a year to run" (accessed 02 May 2016)

² Ards and North Down Borough Council Local Development Plan POP Position Paper: Transportation

³ Ards and North Down Borough Council Local Development Plan POP Position Paper: Transportation

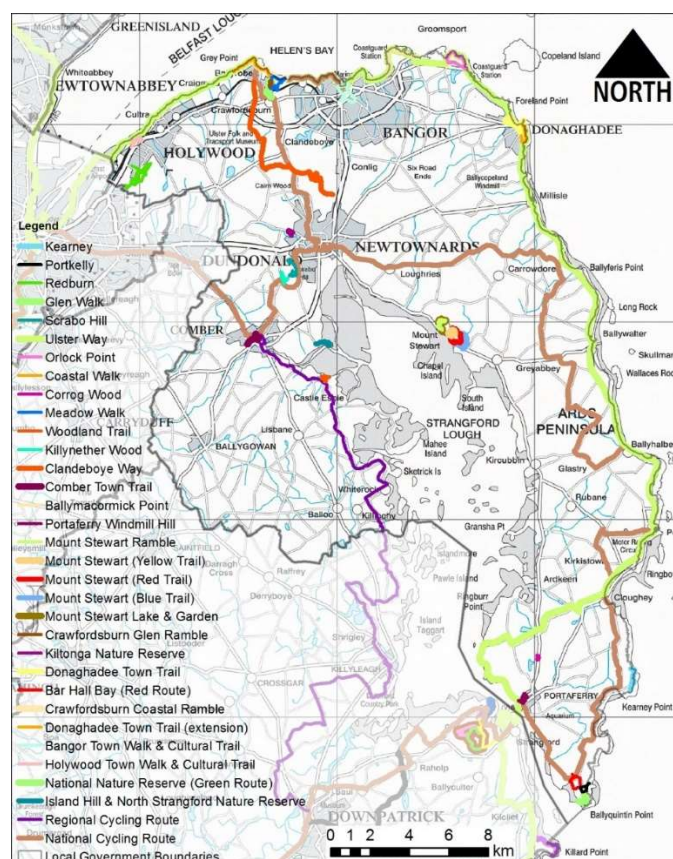
The LTS notes that it is important that everyone can access essential services such as work, education, health or food shops. Whilst private car may be the preferred mode of travel for those people who own one, it should be possible to access these services without a private car. However, standard bus services are not financially viable where there is not a 'critical mass' of passengers. The LTS indicates that the Transport Study and future BMTP will seek to identify a range of possible innovative public transport options for the area that will be supported by the authorities, (including health and education). Those transport options, although not currently developed, may be deliverable within the lifetime of the LDP, subject to NI-wide transport policy.

Walking and Cycling

Walking and cycling routes can connect communities to facilities and services, as well as to open and green space and the wider countryside. The concept of active travel can enable people to access places without using a vehicle as well as provide benefits for local air quality and people's health and well-being. The LDP can be used to encourage and support active travel as a consideration in new developments and projects as well as existing towns.

The LTS notes that of the radial roads within the main settlements, there are 4.2km of roads in Bangor, 2.4km in Holywood, 4.5km in Comber and 2.8km in Donaghadee which have no footway. Footways are, however, present on all radial roads in Newtownards.

Figure 5.8.3: Cycling and Walking Routes in the Ards and North Down Borough



Source: Sustrans, WalkNI (Ulster Way link and quality sections shown as one route)

The Department for Transport's Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy research found that "off-road or traffic free cycle routes have an important role in changing attitudes of non-cyclists... strongly preferred routes include those with substantial physical separation along roads (e.g. with hedge or kerb separation), and on very quiet streets with little or no motor traffic. The LTS reports that:

- Bangor has 9.7km of cycle network infrastructure, of which 3.6km is traffic-free.
- Newtownards has 7.0km of cycle network infrastructure, of which 0km is traffic-free.

- Comber has 3.7km of cycle network infrastructure, of which 1.1km is traffic-free.
- Hollywood and Donaghadee have no cycle network infrastructure.

61% of respondents to the NISRA study for Attitudes to Walking, Cycling and Public Transport said they were satisfied with the current situation for walking in their local area at present and 43% were satisfied in respect of cycling¹. The main reasons why people were not satisfied were 'poor lighting', 'traffic travelling too fast' 'lack of footpaths' and, (for cycling) 'no cycle lanes'. Reasons why people are discouraged from walking are 'bad weather' (29%), 'lack of footpaths' (22%), 'takes too long – the car is quicker' (21%). Reasons why people are discouraged from cycling include 'too much traffic/too dangerous' (22%) and 'health/mobility make it impossible' (16%).

WalkNI signposts 31 established walking routes within the Borough, shown in Figure 5.8.3. These include a section of the Ulster Way. These walking routes are often used for leisure/recreation rather than active travel.

There may be opportunities for cross-Council working on active travel routes that could support local level tourism and other economic initiatives. Likewise within the Borough there may be opportunities to connect existing routes together such as at Ballyquintan Point and Kearney Point.

A national cycling network route (99) already connects these walks in the Ards Peninsula as the route connects Portaferry to Newtownards via the coast. At Newtownards, cyclists can go north to Bangor (93) or southwest to Comber and on to Belfast via the Comber Greenway (more information below). A regional route (20) can also take cyclists from Comber and along the west coast of Strangford Lough². Again, there may be opportunities to improve route connectivity to other active travel routes and improve accessibility such as at Island Hill. More information is on the WalkNI and Sustrans sites.

Greenways

Figure 5.8.4: Map of Primary and Secondary Greenway Routes



¹ NISRA; Attitudes to Walking, Cycling and Public Transport in Northern Ireland 2018/2019

² Ards and North Down Borough Council Local Development Plan POP Position Paper: Transportation

Source: Department for Infrastructure (DfI) 2016: Exercise – Explore – Enjoy: A Strategic Plan for Greenways

In 2016, the Department for Infrastructure published ‘A Strategic Plan for Greenways’¹. This strategic plan identifies 1,000 km of potential primary and secondary greenway routes to connect people and places, often following the disused railway network. A third tier of community greenways could also be feasible that would help further connect local communities to facilities and services; to local green and open space; and with neighbouring communities.

The Comber Greenway is a seven-mile traffic free walk and cycleway on the route of a disused railway line. There are preliminary plans to extend the route by another 7 miles on to Newtownards – this is not shown in Figure 5.8.4. The Comber Greenway is an excellent example of a local level greenway project. There are two other community greenways in the Borough. Ballycrochan Walkway and Bangor Parks Walkway; both located in the North Down area of the Borough. The LTS includes ‘to maintain and expand provision of greenways between settlements’ among its objectives for ‘Attractive and safe Travel Networks’ and ‘Safety’.

5.8.3 Likely Evolution of the Baseline without the Local Development Plan

In the absence of a new plan, emissions from the transport sector are less likely to decrease. Without current spatial information, there is likely to be an increased risk of missing key opportunities to integrate efficient public transport and active travel routes that can help people reduce their reliance on the car. Development of land based on older information is unlikely to be able to consider the most sustainable development of current land in terms of journey times, route linkages and accessibility, as well as provision of alternative modes of sustainable and active travel options.

5.8.4 Key Sustainability Issues for Transport and Accessibility

- There is a need to reduce pollutant emissions from the transport sector and this could be partly achieved through the planning of transport routes that enable shorter journeys and the integration of public transport and active travel options.
- Reliance on the car is high, but a significant number of households do not have access to a private vehicle and are reliant upon public transport, taxis or walking and cycling.
- Although there are bus and rail services in the Borough, the number of people using public transport or active travel to get to work or school is below the NI average.
- For journeys to work of less than 2km, the car is the dominant mode of transport. Measures are needed to help encourage active travel or more sustainable modes of transport and to reduce reliance on the car.
- There is an opportunity to apply spatial planning to help enable people to live more sustainable lifestyles through a choice of transport options.
- Measures are needed to help futureproof the Borough’s transport routes toward a more sustainable future – integration of active travel routes and park and ride/share facilities.
- There is expected to be an increase in electric vehicles and demand for vehicle charging facilities across the Council area.
- Measures may be needed that focus on the issues faced by people living in the rural areas and more remote parts of the Borough.
- The Portaferry to Strangford ferry service cuts down an alternative road journey by 46-miles.

¹ Department for Infrastructure (DfI) (2016): Exercise-Explore-Enjoy: A Strategic Plan for Greenways

- There is potential for new greenway routes to be developed and existing routes to be extended with multiple benefits for health and well-being, the local environment and the local economy.
- Additional financial support for community and public transport is likely to be a future consideration.
- There is potential to connect existing walking and cycling routes together, as well as across Council boundaries, whilst enhancing accessibility with new local level routes.
- Planning to connect active travel routes across Council boundaries presents an opportunity to help support local level economic initiatives.
- Pedestrian access in town centres has improved, but the road networks still take priority which may have potential negative impacts in the long term and may decrease air quality.
- There is potential to improve local level active travel routes in the Ards Peninsula to improve people's access to facilities, services and the outdoors in partnership with the Peninsula Healthy Living Partnership.

5.9 Air Quality

5.9.1 Review of Policies, Plans, Programmes and Strategies

Air quality is an important indicator of local, regional and international environmental conditions as it helps to indicate levels and sources of air pollutants and air pollution trends. Air pollution is both an urban and a rural issue that can affect human health, but when levels of certain substances such as nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide or ammonia are exceeded, the effects on ecosystems can also be adverse.

DAERA and Councils manage air quality in Northern Ireland in compliance with domestic legislation (the Environment Order 2002, the Air Quality Regulations (NI) 2003 and the Air Quality Standards Regulations (NI) 2010). These stem from European Air Quality Directives and the UK Air Quality Strategy for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland 2007. This 2007 Strategy provides the strategic direction to help meet objectives that will protect human health and ecosystems¹. The 2019 UK Clean Air Strategy² states that the main sources of air pollution in NI are from road traffic emissions, particulate matter from residential burning of solid fuels, and ammonia emissions from agricultural activities. It highlights the risks posed to both the environment and human health and in section 9.5 it focuses on actions under way to tackle air pollution in NI.

A Clean Air Strategy for NI is currently in preparation. The draft discussion document for this Strategy³ highlights that in addition to impacts on health and mortality, air pollution has economic impacts and environmental effects. Air pollution, and in particular nitrogen emissions in the form of ammonia, has negative effects on plants, trees and water bodies that support our wildlife. DAERA's draft Environment Strategy (2021) seeks to achieve the outcome of 'excellent air, water, land and neighbourhood quality'. Key outcomes of this strategy are to have cleaner air and for critical loads of nitrogen deposition and critical levels of ammonia to no longer be exceeded at any designated sites.

Air quality objectives are set at a regional level and include limits for air pollutants. These are primarily based on ensuring protection of human health and of sensitive habitats. Other measures include smoke control areas and Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs). Regional policy thus recommends developing policy links between air quality and climate change.

Overarching regional planning guidance highlights agriculture, transport and energy supply as the three sectors which give rise to the greatest proportion of greenhouse gases in Northern Ireland. All these sources emit other air pollutants in addition to greenhouse gases. Agricultural land makes up a significant amount of land cover in Northern Ireland; we remain heavily reliant on private car use for journeys and we are mostly dependent on fossil fuels for energy supply and heating. Air quality does not have a specific planning policy, but under the SPPS it can be a material consideration. The draft Marine Plan includes among its core policies the requirement for public authorities to consider the potential impact of proposals on air quality.

The PfG includes commitments on decarbonising, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving transport infrastructure, which can also contribute to improving air quality⁴. Improving air quality is a fundamental aspect of sustainable development as it is important for the quality of our environment, the health of our society and the sustainability of our economy.

¹ UK Gov (2011) Policy paper: The air quality strategy for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland: Volume 1

² UK Gov (2019) Clean Air Strategy 2019 (found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/clean-air-strategy-2019>)

³ DAERA (2021) A Clean Air Strategy for Northern Ireland – Public Discussion Document

⁴ Northern Ireland Executive: Draft Programme for Government Framework 2016-2021

The Council's Corporate Plan 2024-2028 has the vision of 'A Sustainable Borough' and includes the Environmental Priority "Reducing carbon emissions as we transition to net zero".

The Council's Community Plan, '*The Big Plan*', has a vision for the Borough to be a healthy place with 'empowered, resilient individuals and communities'. There are five outcomes of which one is focused on ensuring people 'enjoy good health and wellbeing'. Positive mental wellbeing and physical activity are acknowledged as steps toward this outcome. The LDP provides an opportunity to help spatially manage development and its potential impacts on local air quality in a positive way.

5.9.2 Baseline Information

Relevant information is in the LDP Position Papers on 'Transportation' and 'Environmental Resilience'. This topic overlaps with the Health and Well-being, Material Assets, Physical Resources, Transport and Accessibility, Climate Change, Natural Resources and Historic Environment and Cultural Heritage sections of this report.

Air Quality

There are currently no active AQMAs declared in Ards and North Down¹. Air quality across the area is 'generally good'². This is in part due to the Borough's coastal location and also because there are few industrial processes in the area that are significantly detrimental³. It is important to consider appropriate locations for development so that air quality can be maintained.

Nitrogen oxides (NO_x, which include nitric oxide NO and nitrogen dioxide NO₂) are primarily released from the combustion of fossil fuels used in transport, energy and industry. NO₂ can exacerbate symptoms of heart and lung conditions, thereby reducing quality of life for affected individuals. In addition, NO_x can have environmental impacts. Deposition of nitrogen to the environment both directly as a gas (dry deposition) and in precipitation (wet deposition) can change soil chemistry and affect biodiversity in sensitive habitats⁴.

NO_x can react with other air pollutants to form ground-level ozone. Ozone is a gas which is damaging to human health and can trigger inflammation of the respiratory tract, eyes, nose and throat, as well as asthma attacks. Ozone can also have adverse effects on the environment through oxidative damage to vegetation including crops.

Particulate pollution occurs when fine particles are emitted during combustion of fossil fuels and from road transport. Particulate matter (PM₁₀) can travel into airways and cause inflammation, or a worsening of the condition of people with heart and lung diseases⁵. Fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) can be carried deep into the lungs and may carry surface-absorbed toxic, or carcinogenic, compounds into the body. The Air pollution in NI 2022 report indicates that there is growing concern regarding ultra-fine particulate matter in the UK and the impact of this on health.

Sulphur Dioxide (SO₂) is a pollutant produced during the combustion of coal and oil. Concentrations of this pollutant have declined significantly since the 1990s. SO₂ is monitored at five automatic sites in NI. All sites met EU limit values and Air Quality Strategy objectives in the period 2018-2022⁶.

Ammonia (NH₃) is a gas which is emitted from waste and agricultural activities such as manure handling, storage and spreading. Impacts on human health and ecology are further discussed below.

¹ DAERA (online) Northern Ireland Air – Air Quality in Northern Ireland Air Quality Management Areas (found at <https://www.airqualityni.co.uk/laqm/aqma> (accessed 01/03/2024))

² Ards and North Down Borough Council Local Development Plan – POP Position Paper Environmental Resilience

³ Ards and North Down Borough Council (2024) 2023 Air Quality Progress Report

⁴ DEFRA (online) National statistics Emissions of air pollutants in the UK – Nitrogen oxides (NO_x) Updated 19 February 2024

⁵ DAERA (2019) Air pollution in Northern Ireland 2018

⁶ DAERA (2023) Air Pollution in Northern Ireland 2022 report

Information on the Borough's air quality and monitoring can be accessed at www.airqualityni.co.uk where progress reports and screening assessments can also be found.

Air Quality Monitoring

There are 18 air quality monitoring stations across NI where pollutants that can adversely affect human health are monitored and measured against UK Air Quality Strategy objectives¹. Each is equipped with continuous monitoring equipment for one or more pollutants and public warnings are issued when levels approach or reach 'high' levels.

Across NI, urban background sites measuring NO₂ remained relatively stable between 2011 and 2016, varying between 20 and 23µg/m³. Since 2017 the average annual mean concentration of NO₂ has been below this level and was 13.6µg/m³ across Northern Ireland's urban background sites in 2022. Roadside nitrogen dioxide levels have decreased from 35.1µg/m³ in 2011 to 23.8µg/m³ in 2022². Emissions dipped in 2020, coinciding with restrictions implemented in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Air quality is monitored at several locations in Ards and North Down, including hotspots where there is traffic congestion at rush hour in Newtownards, Holywood and Comber and along the A2 between Bangor and Belfast, which carries approx. 44,000 vehicles a day.

Monitoring since 2001 of ozone levels in urban and rural sites has shown that ozone exceedances happen in some years but not others. Unlike some other pollutants, levels of ozone in Northern Ireland do not appear to be decreasing, but remain variable from year to year³.

Monitoring of PM₁₀ since 2009 has shown relatively low and stable annual mean concentrations at the rural background site and a gradual decline in urban monitoring sites since 2010.

The 2023 Air Quality Progress Report identified no exceedances of the Air Quality Strategy objectives for 2022 for any of the pollutants assessed with relevant exposure, however it advises that the A2 remains the main area of concern with relation to Air Quality for Nitrogen Dioxide and PM₁₀. Until a new working pattern is further established after the Covid-19 restrictions in 2020 and 2021, a confirmed trend in reduction cannot be confirmed⁴.

Transport Sources

The UK Clean Air Strategy has highlighted traffic emissions as one of the top three sources of air pollution problems in Northern Ireland. There are several main roads located in and around the northern part of the Council which are principal routes into the city of Belfast. Reliance across the Council on road transport is high due to the rural nature of much of the Borough, which is acknowledged as suffering from less regular public transport services in the Transport Position Paper. As discussed in section 5.8 'Transport and Accessibility', the number of households in the Borough with access to one, two or three vehicles is above the NI average.

Road transport is a significant contributor to air pollution. There is a planned phase out of the sale of new diesel and petrol vehicles by 2035, which should help to significantly reduce air pollutant emissions and improve air quality at roadsides. However, overall emissions will also be influenced by methods of electricity generation if there is a corresponding increase in demand. More than half of transport-related particulate matter PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} is produced through tyre and brake wear⁵ and road dust and the transition to electric vehicles will not remove these sources.

¹ DAERA (2021) Northern Ireland Environmental Statistics Report 2021

² DAERA (2023) Northern Ireland Environmental Statistics Report 2023 published 25/05/2023

³ DAERA (2023) Air Pollution in Northern Ireland 2022 report

⁴ Ards and North Down Borough Council (2024) 2023 Air Quality Progress Report

⁵ DAERA (2023) Air Pollution in Northern Ireland 2022 report

Energy supply and distribution is discussed in section 5.6 'Material Assets'¹. Encouraging and supporting modal shift to active and sustainable modes of transport would also reduce emissions from transport sources.

Agricultural Sources

Ammonia (NH₃) is a gas that is emitted into the air through agricultural practices such as the housing of livestock, the storage and spreading of animal manures and slurries, anaerobic digestion and the use of chemical fertiliser². The UK Clean Air Strategy identifies intensive pig and poultry farms as point sources of ammonia emissions. It also identifies cattle farming, particularly dairy farming, as accounting for a substantial proportion of ammonia emissions in the UK. Extensively grazed livestock, which are not housed, make a small contribution to ammonia emissions³.

Since 2001, ammonia emissions from livestock in NI have increased by 9.1% (from 25.3kt in 2001 to 27.6kt in 2021) in contrast with a 14.8% decrease in livestock emissions from the UK as a whole over the same period. However, emissions from fertilisers have decreased in NI from 3.3kt in 2001 to 2.6kt in 2021⁴.

Ammonia emitted into the air is subsequently deposited as nitrogen onto land and water surfaces. Nitrogen deposition occurs in gaseous form close to the source (dry deposition) or through rainfall (wet deposition), often many miles from the original ammonia source. Ammonia can also impact human health through the generation of secondary particulate matter.

DAERA has advised that most areas of NI, including designated sites and other priority habitats, are receiving levels of nitrogen which are significantly above their "Critical Load", the concentration at which significant ecological damage occurs⁵. The UK has obligations under legislation and international treaties to reduce ammonia emissions. By 2030, the UK must reduce its ammonia emissions by 16% in comparison to 2005 levels. Northern Ireland is expected to contribute to these UK reduction targets.

In January 2023, DAERA published for consultation a 'Draft Ammonia Strategy for NI'. The Draft Ammonia Strategy indicates that "sustained and tangible reductions in ammonia are required to protect nature, to meet Northern Ireland's legal obligations and to ensure a sustainable agri-food sector". The long-term target to 2050 is to reduce ammonia emissions to a point where Critical Loads of nitrogen deposition and Critical Levels of ammonia are at a more sustainable and pragmatic place. Planning authorities must take into account relevant statutory obligations in respect of ammonia emissions when considering development proposals.

Energy Sources

As discussed in section 5.6 'Material Assets', since 2001 there has been an increase in the use of natural gas and a move away from oil and coal for domestic heating purposes across NI as a whole. Electricity generated from renewables has also increased significantly since 2001⁶. Around 40% of all households continue to rely on oil for central heating, however the proportion of households in the Borough heated by natural gas has risen from a quarter in the 2011 Census to almost half in the 2021 Census⁷. Less than 1% of households use coal or wood as their main source of central heating. Diversification in our energy supply means that pollutants from fossil fuel combustion such as sulphur dioxide and carbon emissions have been decreasing.

¹ Climate NI website

² DAERA: NI Environmental Statistics Annual Report Issue 11 2019

³ DEFRA (2019) Clean Air Strategy 2019

⁴ DAERA: NI Environmental Statistics Annual Report 2023

⁵ DAERA (online) Ammonia emissions in Northern Ireland (found at <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/ammonia-emissions-northern-ireland> (accessed 01/03/2024))

⁶ DAERA, Carbon Intensity Indicators 2016

⁷ NISRA Census 2021 MS-E11: Central heating (household based) - (classification 1)

There are currently six Smoke Control Areas in the Borough¹ which have been declared to improve local air quality by reducing air pollutants like smoke, sulphur dioxide (SO₂) and PM₁₀ from the burning of solid fuels.

Human Health

There is an important link between air quality and human health. Life expectancy in the UK is shortened by an average of 7-8 months because of poor air quality. Public Health England estimates that in Northern Ireland 553 deaths per year could be attributed to particulate matter and that, 'current levels of particulate air pollution have a considerable impact on public health'².

It is not just mortality but also hospital admissions that are affected. NO₂ can irritate the lungs and reduce resistance to respiratory infections, with prolonged exposure particularly dangerous for children³. PM₁₀ can cause heart and lung issues with carcinogenic risks. NISRA publishes death rates for the number of related respiratory deaths for men and women under the age of 75. The Borough's rates are well below the NI average⁴.

5.9.3 Likely Evolution of the Baseline without the Local Development Plan

In the absence of a new LDP, there may be the risk of decreasing air quality through inappropriately located development. There would likely be fewer opportunities to spatially influence development and helping to maintain or improve local air quality by increasing access to more sustainable modes of travel including active travel. There would be less opportunity to deliver sustainable infrastructure and land use that will reduce public exposure to air pollutants.

5.9.4 Key Sustainability Issues for Air Quality

- Air quality in the Borough is generally good. There are no air quality management areas.
- There are smoke control areas in some parts of the Borough where authorised fuels must be used.
- The A2 is an area of concern for air quality because of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and particulate matter (PM₁₀) emissions from road transport.
- Maintaining local air quality should be a consideration when zoning land for potential use or development so that inappropriate adjacent land uses are avoided.
- There will be a need to increase the number of electric vehicle charging points across the Borough and particularly in the Ards Peninsula.
- Measures to encourage people to use more sustainable transport options will be needed to help reduce reliance on cars and reduce transport emissions.
- Ammonia is emitted from agricultural practices and in NI it has been identified as one of the main air pollutants because of the significant contribution that the agricultural sector makes to the regional economy. There is a need to reduce ammonia emissions from the agricultural sector.
- Support for appropriate renewables will help further reduce reliance on traditional energy sources that cause air pollution,
- Air pollutants can be linked to respiratory illnesses in NI, however the Borough is below the NI average for deaths related to respiratory illnesses.

¹ DAERA Smoke Control Areas North Down and Ards District Council (found at <http://www.airqualityni.co.uk/laqm/smoke-control-areas?id=458>)

² Public Health England (2014): Estimating Local Mortality Burdens Associated with Particulate Air Pollution

³ DAERA: NI Environmental Statistics Annual Report Issue 11 2019

⁴ <http://www.ninis2.nisra.gov.uk/public/Home.aspx>

5.10 Climate Change

5.10.1 Review of Policies, Plans, Programmes and Strategies

The typical weather conditions of an area are based on natural variabilities that create the climate. These variabilities can cause extreme weather events but also normal or expected conditions. It is only when there is a shift in the usual weather patterns and climate, that the term “climate change” should be applied.

There are several factors that affect our climate. These include how near to the sea and how far from the equator we are located, as well as local topography, wind direction and ocean current. During the last few decades, it has become more and more accepted that human activity is affecting the climate.

Since the late 18th century and the Industrial Revolution, greenhouse gases (GHG) - carbon dioxide (CO₂), nitrous oxide (N₂O), methane (CH₄) and fluorinated gases - have been entering the atmosphere at an accelerated rate due to human activity. These additional gases are mostly emitted by fossil fuel combustion, but are also influenced by deforestation and agricultural practices. They add to background levels and increase the natural warming of the planet - the ‘greenhouse effect’.

Climate scientists have estimated that human activities have caused approximately 1.0°C of global warming above pre-industrial levels. If change continues at the current rate, warming is likely to reach 1.5°C between 2030 and 2052¹. Global sea levels have increased by 15-20 centimetres since 1900 through thermal expansion and ice loss from glaciers and land². Projected global mean sea level rise for 1.5°C of global warming has an indicative range of 0.26 – 0.77m, relative to 1986–2005³.

The main forum for international action on climate change is the United Nations Framework convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), created in 1992. Its overall aim is to “*achieve... stabilisation of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. Such a level should be achieved within a time frame sufficient to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change, to ensure food production is not threatened and to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner.*”⁴

UNFCCC negotiations led to the Kyoto Protocol in 1997. The Kyoto Protocol set a target for 37 industrialised countries to reduce their emissions by an average 5% below 1990 levels, for the period 2008 to 2012. As part of this group, the UK committed to a 12.5% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. These targets were successfully met. A second Kyoto commitment period was agreed from 2013 to 2020 to bridge the gap to the commencement of actions deriving from the Paris Agreement (see below). The EU and 29 other countries signed the second commitment agreement and have agreed to jointly meet a 20% reduction target (below 1990 levels)⁵.

Continuing UNFCCC negotiations led to the Paris Agreement in December 2015. The Paris Agreement is the first truly global effort to reduce emissions. As of March 2020, 189 out of 197 countries have ratified the Paris Agreement, including the UK and Ireland⁶. The main aim of the Paris Agreement is to hold the increase in global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit warming to 1.5°C.

¹ IPCC (2018) Special Report: Global Warming of 1.5 °C - Summary for Policymakers

² Committee on Climate Change (2017) UK Climate Change Risk Assessment 2017 Synthesis Report

³ IPCC (2018) Special Report: Global Warming of 1.5 °C - Summary for Policymakers

⁴ Committee on Climate Change ‘Global Action on Climate Change’ (found at <https://www.theccc.org.uk/tackling-climate-change/the-legal-landscape/global-action-on-climate-change/> accessed 03/04/2020)

⁵ European Commission - EU Climate Strategies & Targets - Kyoto 2nd commitment period (2013–20) (found at https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/strategies/progress/kyoto_2_en, accessed 03/04/2020)

⁶ UN Paris Agreement - Status of Ratification (found at <https://unfccc.int/process/the-paris-agreement/status-of-ratification>, accessed 31/03/2020)

The UNFCCC commits all signatory nations to formulate, implement, publish and update measures to prepare for the impacts of climate change, known as 'adaptation'. The 2010 'Cancun Adaptation Framework' includes the agreement that adaptation must be given the same priority as mitigation.

The UK was the first country to have a legally binding commitment to reduce GHG emissions with the UK Climate Change Act 2008, which legislated for the 80% reduction of GHG emissions based on 1990 levels by 2050. This led to the formation of the independent body, the Committee on Climate Change (CCC), and the CCC's Adaptation Sub-Committee. These advise the UK and devolved administrations on carbon budgets and preparing for climate change. On 1st May 2019, the UK Parliament declared an Environment and Climate Change Emergency. In the following month, the Climate Change Act was amended to commit the UK government to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 100% of 1990 levels by 2050 ('net zero'). This will ensure the UK carbon account is below 1990 baseline levels. The overall aim of the legislation remains the same in that the UK is to be a low-carbon economy and one that is responsible for its emissions, targets to reduce them, and adaptation measures to help combat risks from climate change.

The Climate Change (Northern Ireland) Act passed into law in June 2022. This Act now includes a target for net zero carbon emissions (100% reduction on baseline) in NI by 2050, which aligns NI with the UK. The legislation aims to deliver a 'climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2045.' It also commits NI to generating 80% of its electricity supply from renewable sources by 2030.¹

The NI Executive's overarching (draft) Green Growth Strategy promises to 'lead by example by cutting emissions'². All NI policies and strategies will be expected to align with the Green Growth Strategy, which 'will be central to all key decisions made by the government.' up to 2050. It will provide Climate Action Plans to reduce sector specific GHGs and as NI moves toward a 'low emissions society,' the opportunities for associated jobs and training will be optimised. A Green Growth test will be applied to all new plans and laws to test, 'how they will help to combat climate change, improve our environment and create green jobs.' Reducing GHG emissions to zero is part of the strategy, but so too is the creation of green jobs linked to a cleaner environment, more sustainable land use and greater biodiversity. The Strategy's vision for 2050 makes the link between climate action and positive benefits for the economy, society and the environment. It states, 'As a result of all our efforts, we have a more resilient environment with a healthy ecosystem and a strong sustainable economy.'

In NI's first Climate Change Adaptation Programme (NICCAP) 2014-2019, the focus was on flooding, water, natural capital, agriculture and forestry. Flooding was identified as '*potentially one of the most significant and urgent risks*' in NI³ and local Councils were identified as being '*particularly well placed to raise awareness and provide leadership through their responsibilities*' on climate change.

In NI's second Adaptation Programme (NICCAP2) 2019-2024⁴, 'planning' is referred to as "*essential to managing the resilience of our society and natural environment to an uncertain future, as well as for the known current and projected impacts of a changing climate*". NICCAP2 sets out our preparation for climate change impacts that are already occurring and puts in place plans for future impacts. The aim is "*to build a resilient Northern Ireland in which timely and well-informed decisions are taken to address the socio-economic and environmental impacts of climate change*". Resilience will be built upon under five Key

¹ DAERA [online] The Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 - Key elements (found at <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/topics/protect-environment/climate-change> [accessed 19/12/2023])

² Northern Ireland Executive 2021: Draft Green Growth Strategy for Northern Ireland

³ DoE (2014) Northern Ireland Climate Change Adaptation Programme 2014-2019

⁴ DAERA (2019) Northern Ireland Climate Change Adaptation Programme 2019-2024

Priority Areas - natural capital, infrastructure, people and built environment, disruption to business/supply chains, and food security/global food production.

Each priority area has outcome objectives and for each of those a delivery plan to help achieve that objective. The objectives for each priority area are listed below:

- NC1: 'we have species, habitats and water bodies that are resilient to the impacts of climate change.'
- NC2: 'we have coastal communities, habitats, landforms and infrastructure that are resilient to the impacts of climate change.'
- NC3: 'we have soils and land types that are resilient to the impacts of climate change.'
- IS1: 'we have transport and network services that are resilient to the impacts of flooding and extreme weather'
- P1: 'we have people, homes, buildings and communities resilient to the impacts of flooding & extremes of weather.'
- B1: 'we have businesses that can adapt to the impacts of climate change & extreme weather.'
- I1: 'we have a food system that is resilient to impacts of climate change'.

The key message from NICCAP2 is about ensuring resilience in everything we do. In conjunction with Climate NI, NICCAP2 has also addressed how local government can help deliver the objectives of NICCAP2 and raise awareness on the need for climate change risk assessments

The NI Executive's Programme for Government includes commitments to support the delivery of the Climate Change Act targets and a transition to net zero and to address climate change.

NI's Regional Development Strategy 2035, refers to 'climate change' as a key economic and environmental driver. Measures to tackle climate change through both mitigation and adaptation are evident within RG5 - 'Deliver a sustainable and secure energy supply'; RG8 - 'Manage housing growth to achieve sustainable patterns of residential development'; RG9 - 'Reduce our carbon footprint and facilitate mitigation and adaptation to climate change whilst improving air quality'; RG11 - 'Conserve, protect and, where possible, enhance our built heritage and our natural environment'; and RG12 - 'Promote a more sustainable approach to the provision of water and sewerage services and flood risk management.'

NI's Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) 2015, aims to further sustainable development and views 'mitigating and adapting to climate change' as 'a central challenge'¹. The SPPS promotes the planning system to help reduce GHG emissions through sustainable patterns of development that avoid areas vulnerable to the effects of climate change. The SPPS also fulfilled a requirement of NICCAP by providing a means to build resilience into the natural and built environment, whilst addressing flood risk. The importance of the natural environment in providing resilience to events such as flooding and higher urban temperatures linked to climate change is also referred to under 'Ecosystem Services'.

The UK Marine Policy Statement seeks to achieve integration of marine and terrestrial planning and liaison between respective responsible authorities for terrestrial and marine planning including in plan development, implementation and review stages. The draft Marine Plan for NI directs Public Authorities, where appropriate, to consider the potential impact of proposals on GHG emissions and the proposal's ability to adapt to a changing climate. Public Authorities must also consider any potential impact from proposals on coastal processes.

Ards and North Down Borough Council recognises that in the context of a global climate emergency, there can be no more 'business as usual' and that we must fundamentally

¹ DoE 2015: Strategic Planning Policy Statement for NI: Planning for Sustainable Development

change the way we plan, manage and operate so that both the Council and the Borough as a whole can become more sustainable. We are determined to seize every opportunity to deliver services and enhance our Borough in ways that are practical and resource-efficient.

The Council's Corporate Plan 2024-2028 includes the Environmental Priority – “reducing carbon emissions as we transition to net zero”. It also includes “an environmentally resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets” among its strategic outcomes.

Baseline Information

Relevant information is presented in the LDP Position Papers on The Coast, Environmental Resilience, and Natural Environment. This topic also overlaps with the Health & Well-Being, Material Assets, Physical Resources, Transport and Accessibility, Air Quality, Water, Natural Resources and the Historic Environment sections of this report.

International context

In 2018 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate change (IPCC) published a Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C¹. This Special Report indicates that there is a high degree of confidence that human activities are estimated to have caused approximately 1.0°C of global warming above pre-industrial levels, with a likely range of 0.8°C to 1.2°C.

The IPCC Special Report adds that estimated anthropogenic global warming is currently increasing at 0.2°C (likely between 0.1°C and 0.3°C) per decade due to past and ongoing emissions. Global warming is likely to reach 1.5°C between 2030 and 2052 if it continues to increase at the current rate.

A key message from the Special Report is that climate-related risks for natural and human systems are higher for global warming of 1.5°C than at present, but lower than at 2°C. Limiting global warming to 1.5°C compared to 2°C is projected to lower the impacts on terrestrial, freshwater and coastal ecosystems and to retain more of their services to humans. While climate-related risks to health, livelihoods, food security, water supply, human security, and economic growth are projected to increase with global warming of 1.5°C, they will increase further with 2°C and adaptation may become more challenging.

Sustainable development supports, and often enables, the fundamental societal and systems transitions and transformations that help limit global warming to 1.5°C. Such changes facilitate the pursuit of climate-resilient development pathways that achieve ambitious mitigation and adaptation in conjunction with poverty eradication and efforts to reduce inequalities.

UK Context

The 2008 Climate Change Act requires the UK to produce a report every five years on the risks and opportunities from climate change. The first Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA) was produced in 2012 and enters its third report cycle (CCRA 3) in 2022.

The most recent land and marine climate projections for the UK (UKCP18²) were published in November 2018. The UKCP18 reports that the average temperature over the most recent decade (2009-2018) has been on average 0.3 °C warmer than the 1981-2010 average and 0.9 °C warmer than the 1961-1990 average. All the top ten warmest years for the UK, in the series from 1884, have occurred since 2002. UKCP18 also reports that most recent decade (2009-2018) has been on average 1% wetter than 1981-2010 and 5% wetter than 1961-1990 for the UK overall. Mean sea level around the UK has risen by about 17 cm since the start of the 20th century (when corrected for land movement).

¹ IPCC (2018) Special Report: Global Warming of 1.5 °C - Summary for Policymakers

² Met Office UK Climate Projections 2018 (found at <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/research/approach/collaboration/ukcp/index>)

NI Context

The CCRA 3 Evidence Summary for Northern Ireland¹ identifies 61 risks and opportunities from climate change to Northern Ireland, including to business, infrastructure, housing, the natural environment, our health and from the impacts of climate change internationally. 'More action is needed now' to address 31 of these. Changing climatic conditions and extreme events, high and low temperatures, coastal, river, surface water and groundwater flooding, erosion, pests, pathogens and invasive species are all identified as risks where more action is needed.

The NI Environmental Statistics Report² reports that the ten-year moving average annual minimum temperature has been increasing since the end of the 19th Century and at the end of the 20th century had risen to its highest levels since records began. Trends in the ten-year averaged annual mean and maximum temperatures are less obvious. The NI Environmental Statistics Report does not report any long term trends in summer and winter rainfall, however NICCAP2 has stated that in recent years NI has experienced incidents of extreme and notable weather events. NICCAP2 adds that it is not possible to say conclusively if these events, such as severe and sustained rainfall, are the direct result of human induced climate change. The increased incidence and intensity of such events however, is consistent with what we would expect to see with a changing climate.

The UKCP18 projects greater chance of hotter, drier summers and warmer, wetter winters with more extreme weather and rising sea levels. It also projects higher intensity rainfall events, storm events and increased flood risk. The high emission scenario for NI shows that by 2070 winters could be up to 3.9° warmer and summers could be up to 4.9° hotter, 2070 winters could be 25 per cent wetter and summers 38 per cent drier. By 2100, mean sea levels at Belfast could be up to 94cm higher relative to the 1981-2000 average in the high emissions scenario³.

The CCC recommends a pathway for reduction in GHG emissions with four key steps: Take up of low-carbon solutions, Expansion of low-carbon energy supplies, reducing demand for carbon-intensive activities and Land and greenhouse gas removals.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

In 2021, NI accounted for 5.3% of the UK's GHG emissions, a proportion which has steadily risen from 3.5% in 2008 when NI began publishing an annual bulletin on the Greenhouse Gas Inventory⁴. In 2021 these emissions were estimated to be equivalent to 22.5 million tonnes of CO₂⁵. CO₂ emissions accounted for 67% of all GHG emissions in NI (UK average 80%). It is the most common gas emitted from most sectors with the exception of agriculture and waste management. Methane (CH₄) was a more significant GHG from both of these sectors because of livestock and landfill. Nitrous oxide (N₂O) is the other significant GHG emission from the agriculture sector. This is a difficult GHG to both measure and reduce. NI accounts for a much larger share of the UK's emissions of these gases due to the economic importance of agriculture in NI⁶. Overall, in 2021 there was an increase in GHG emissions of 5% compared to the previous year, but the longer-term trend shows a decrease of 23% compared to the base year, 1990⁷.

¹ Climate Northern Ireland (2021) Evidence for the third UK Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA3) Summary for Northern Ireland

² DAERA (2023) Northern Ireland Environmental Statistics Annual Report 2023

³ UKCP18 Factsheet: Sea level rise and storm surge (found at <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/research/approach/collaboration/ukcp/marine-projections> accessed 19.12.2023)

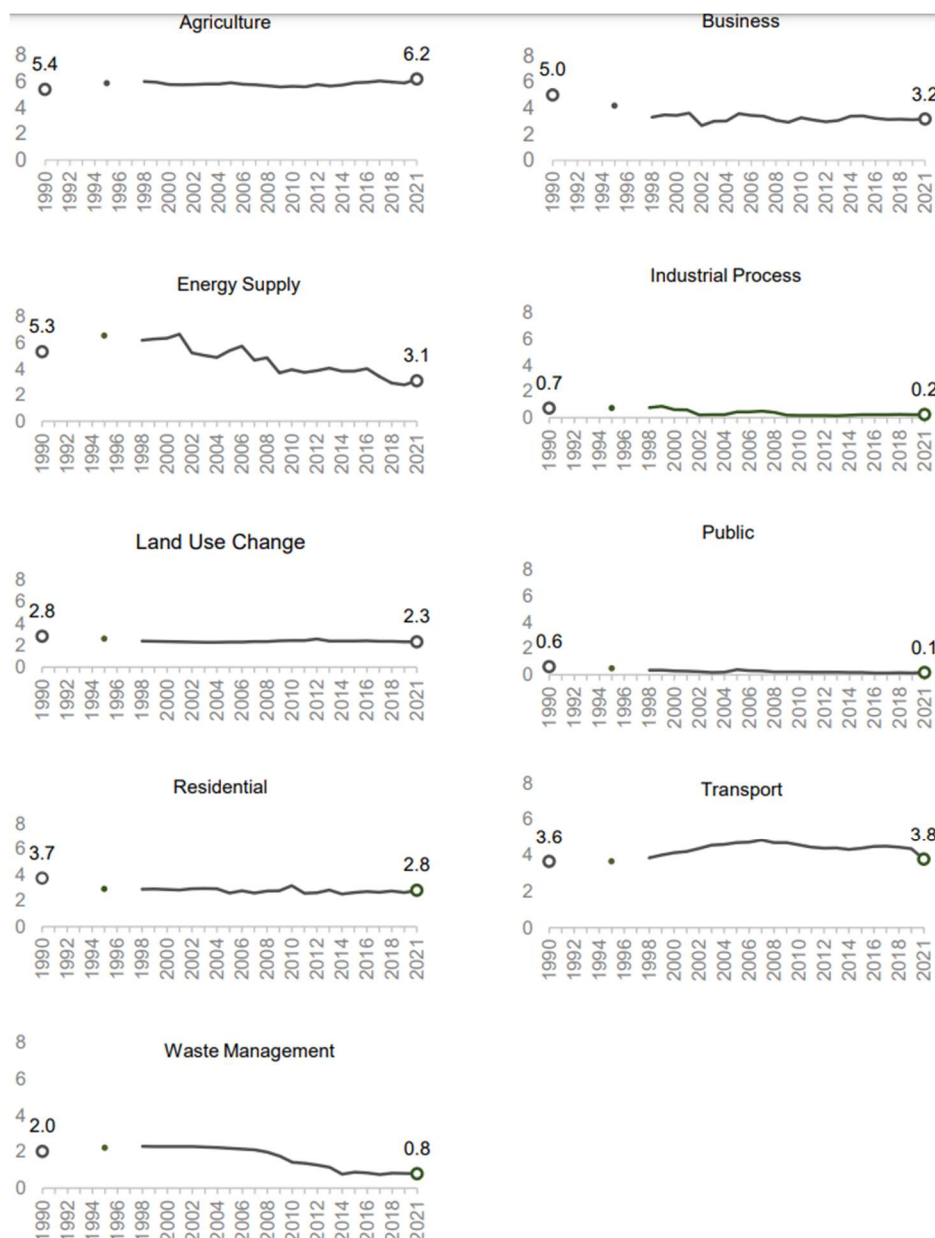
⁴ DAERA [online] Northern Ireland greenhouse gas inventory (found at <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/northern-ireland-greenhouse-gas-inventory> [accessed 19.12.2023])

⁵ DAERA & NISRA (2023) Northern Ireland Greenhouse Gas Emissions 2021 1990-2021 Statistical Bulletin - Key Points.

⁶ Defra 2012: A Climate Change Risk Assessment for Northern Ireland

⁷ DAERA & NISRA (2023) Northern Ireland Greenhouse Gas Emissions 2021 1990-2021 Statistical Bulletin - data and charts Figure 2

Figure 5.10.1: Greenhouse Gas Emissions (by Sector) in NI 1990-2021



Source: DAERA [online] NI greenhouse gas inventory 1990 - 2021 (found <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/northern-ireland-greenhouse-gas-inventory>, accessed 19/12/2023)

As shown in Figure 5.10.1, most sectors have shown a long-term decreasing trend in emissions since the base year, with the largest decreases seen in the energy supply, residential and waste sectors.

The transport and agriculture sectors both showed higher emissions in 2021 than in the base year.

The Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) will include a target for net zero emissions by 2050 and that at least 80% of electricity consumption will be from renewable sources by 2030. The NI Executive's PfG includes a commitment to support the delivery of the 80% renewable electricity by 2030 target, however based on the 2021 greenhouse gas inventory results, NI is currently failing to meet that measure and outcome¹.

¹ DAERA & NISRA (2023) Northern Ireland Greenhouse Gas Emissions 2021 Statistical Bulletin

Agriculture

Since 2002, the agriculture sector has been calculated as the greatest contributor of GHG emissions in NI, representing 27.6% of these emissions in 2021. Although the sector emits a relatively low amount of CO₂, it emits other GHGs to a significant level. The agriculture sector is the main source of CH₄ (methane) and N₂O (nitrous oxide) in NI, accounting for around 80% of total emissions of these GHGs in 2021¹. Livestock and nitrogen fertiliser are the two principal sources of these GHG emissions. Farming is an important part of NI's economy, so there is a responsibility to develop effective measures that will help reduce GHG emissions like N₂O and CH₄, even if they are difficult to estimate.

According to NINIS, there are approximately 700 farms in Ards and North Down, farming an area of approximately 32,500 ha². Section 19 (2) of the Climate Change (NI) Act 2022 requires the Department to develop a sectoral plan for agriculture which must contain proposals for carrying out fully funded carbon audits of farms to assess where performance improvements and savings can be made, and that as part of the carbon auditing process, carbon sequestration measures already being conducted by the sector should be calculated. DAERA's 'Efficient Farming Cuts Greenhouse Gases - Implementation Plan 2016-2020' (*Efficient Farming*) identified a number of measures that can reduce GHG emissions in the agricultural sector. These include 'better nutrient management', 'better livestock management', 'improving land and carbon management' and 'increasing energy efficiency and renewable energy'. A key objective of the NICCAP2 is that "*we have a food system that is resilient to impacts of climate change*". While some elements of '*Efficient Farming*' such as increased fuel efficiency in machinery and improved nutrient management practices are largely outside the influence of planning, the LDP may be able to support the delivery of some of the proposed measures in the '*Efficient Farming*' programme and NICCAP2. These include facilitating on-farm renewables, storage facilities for crops, slurry/manure and dirty water that meet modern standards, and housing for dairy, pigs and poultry that is highly efficient in respect of its lighting, heating, cooling and ventilation.

The UK CCRA 2017 also identifies current and future risk to agriculture from drought and flooding and identifies that strategic planning for increased water scarcity in vulnerable locations is needed, including re-evaluation of land use options and, if necessary, investment in storage infrastructure may be necessary to maximise use of surplus winter rainfall.

Transport

In 2021, the transport sector accounted for 16.7% of all GHG emissions in NI, and represented an increase of 0.1% on baseline levels. The level of transport emissions in 2020 and 2021 was influenced by the effects of Covid-19 related restrictions, however until 2019 these figures reflected the reliance people have in NI for motorised vehicles and also reflect the rural nature of the country. Transport is a significant contributor of CO₂ and, along with reducing NO₂ emissions that can affect health, is why current UK government policy '*The Road to Zero*' seeks to end the sale of new conventional petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2040³. The policy's eventual aim is that almost every car and van is 'zero emission' by 2050. The transition to zero emission vehicles does not just require the vehicles to be available and affordable. An infrastructure network needs to be in place that is easy for current and prospective drivers to locate and use, and is affordable, efficient and reliable. The *Road to Zero* acknowledges that accommodating this transition will require many changes to the electricity system. It therefore includes the objective of "*ensuring local planning policies incorporate facilities for charging electric vehicles*".

Although the new emissions standards for HGVs have achieved significant air quality improvements, CO₂ emissions from HGVs have remained relatively constant in recent years. Zero emission options are yet to be developed and made available commercially for all types

¹ DAERA & NISRA (2023) Northern Ireland Greenhouse Gas Emissions 2021 Statistical Bulletin Table 3.

² NINIS Farm Census (administrative geographies) 1999-2018

³ UK Department for Transport (2018) The Road to Zero Next steps towards cleaner road transport and delivering our Industrial Strategy

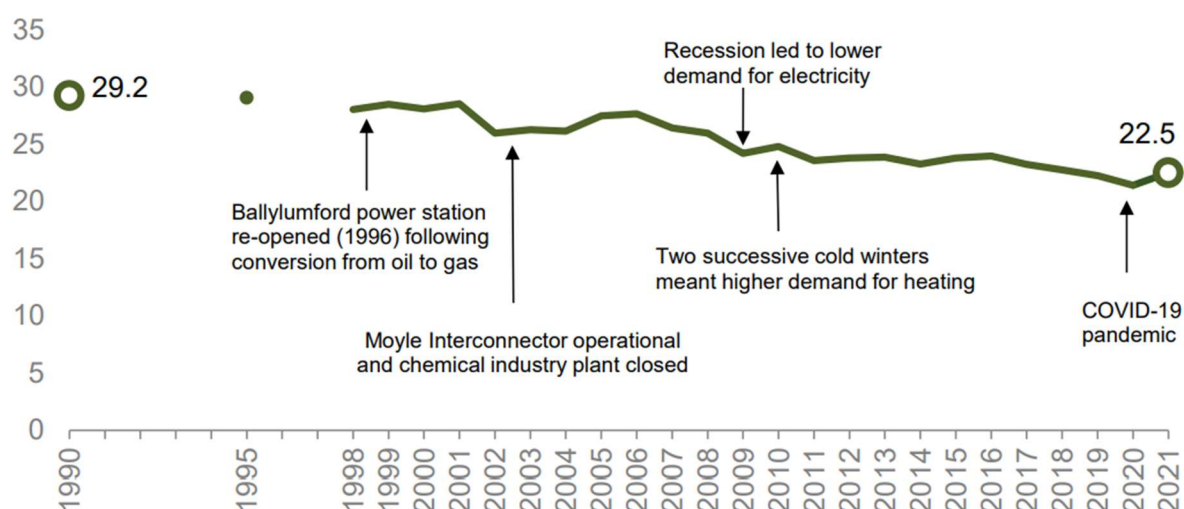
of HGVs. Transportation of goods and freight can also be achieved more efficiently through a reduction in traffic congestion or the consideration of alternative modes such as rail.

New development needs to be encouraged to consider the infrastructure needed for these future changes in the transport system. Likewise, the LDP could be used to help reduce GHG emissions from transport, by encouraging and enabling the provision of accessible walking and cycling routes, as well as supporting the provision of adequate public transport options. An outcome objective of NICCAP2 is that “*we have transport and network services that are resilient to the impacts of flooding & extreme weather*”. Spatial planning of land uses that facilitate the provision of the most effective local and regional level travel routes should help to encourage reduced car dependency and increased active travel. Consideration can also be given to vulnerability to climate change when zoning areas. More information is in the Transport and Accessibility and Air Quality sections of this report.

Energy Supply

The energy sector (energy generation and heat production) has been one of the main contributors to reductions in GHG emissions in NI, having reduced from 5.3 MtCO₂e in 1990 to 3.1 MtCO₂e in 2021¹, the largest reduction in GHG emissions from the base year of all the sectors. The reduction is due to the switch from coal and oil to natural gas, improvements in energy efficiency and the uptake of renewables². The effects of some of these measures are demonstrated in Figure 5.10.2 below.

Figure 5.10.2: Greenhouse Gas emissions NI 1990-2021 (MtCO₂e)



Source: DAERA [online] NI greenhouse gas inventory 1990 - 2021 (found <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/northern-ireland-greenhouse-gas-inventory>, accessed 19/12/2023)

There are currently two gas-fired power stations in NI - Ballylumford and Coolkeeragh³. Kilroot Power Station is, in 2023, carrying out a conversion from coal to gas. Gas is less carbon intensive and more energy efficient than coal and oil, therefore is a preferred option in terms of GHG emissions and efficiency. The decreased reliance on coal and oil for energy generation has helped to reduce GHG emissions from the sector. As policy directs the energy market toward reduced GHG emissions and a low carbon future, changes in sources and production will have to occur. These include diversity of renewables, battery storage and carbon capture projects, and a grid that can enable multiple renewable connections including for prosumers i.e. small-scale producers. Northern Ireland Electricity (NIE) has classified a significant amount of land at saturation point i.e. very limited potential for generation export, without investment⁴. More information is in the ‘Material Assets’ section of this report.

¹ DAERA & NISRA (2023) Northern Ireland Greenhouse Gas Emissions 2021 Statistical Bulletin Table 3.

² DAERA (2023) Northern Ireland Environmental Statistics Report 2023

³ Department for the Economy (June 2018) Energy in Northern Ireland 2018

⁴ NIE & SONI (2018) Consultation on Connecting Further Generation in Northern Ireland

Renewable Energy

Renewable energy is not reliant upon fossil fuel combustion and can help reduce GHG emissions from the energy sector, as it uses natural energy with a low or zero carbon footprint. The 2023 NI Carbon Intensity Indicators report indicates that annual power generation from renewables has increased from 153GWh in 2004 to 3,914 GWh in 2021 (slightly down from 4,401 GWh in 2020) with generation doubling over 5 year period 2014-19, as seen in Figure 5.6.3.

Regional planning policy promotes a cautious approach to renewables development in designated landscapes of significant value. While coastal or elevated locations may have a higher potential wind resource, these areas may also have landscape or seascape value.

Renewable energy development proposals in the marine area are managed under a separate consenting regime within the framework of the UK Marine Policy Statement and the NI Marine Plan, once the latter is adopted. Marine areas adjoining Ards and North Down's coast were identified in the Offshore Renewable Energy Strategic Action Plan 2012-2020 as having considerable potential for offshore wind, wave and tidal current generation. More information on specific projects is presented in section 5.8, '*Material Assets*' however to date, no successful applications have been made. Commercial offshore renewables will require a connection to the onshore electricity transmission network and are likely to require new onshore grid infrastructure. The SPPS encourages consenting authorities for both terrestrial and marine environments to work together.

Residential, Business and Industrial

The residential sector is among the top contributors to GHG emissions within NI, despite decreases in CO₂ emissions since the base year in 1990¹. NI remains dependent on fossil fuels for home heating, however, in recent years there has been a transition from coal and oil to gas for heating purposes². The proportion of households in the Borough reliant on oil for central heating has decreased from around 64% to 40% over the period 2011 to 2021 with a corresponding increase in gas central heating from 25% to 47% over the same period³.

'Business' and 'Industrial Processes' respectively accounted for 14% and 0.9% of NI GHG emissions in 2021⁴. Both sectors have also seen substantial decreases in GHG emissions since the base year. This reduction is in part related to a reduction in the use of coal in industrial combustion⁵. Emissions from houses and businesses can be linked to not just their source of fuel heating but also their energy efficiency and their location to key services.

The DFE has indicated that almost all of Northern Ireland has rocks and sediments at shallow depth that could be used for geothermal heating and cooling with a Ground Source Heat Pump and many areas have favourable geology with huge untapped potential for useful geothermal energy⁶. This sustainable low carbon energy resource is suitable for homes and businesses and potential is further discussed in the '*Physical Resources*' section.

NICCAP2 includes the outcome objectives that "*we have people, homes, buildings and communities that are resilient to the impacts of flooding and extremes of weather*" and that "*we have businesses that can adapt to impacts of climate change and extreme weather*". The LDP could be used to help facilitate and encourage low carbon lifestyles and to help reduce GHG emissions from the residential, business and industrial sectors, as well as better equipping businesses and communities to adapt to the impacts of climate change. Measures to do this could include energy efficient / green building design, access to

¹ DAERA & NISRA (2023) Northern Ireland Greenhouse Gas Emissions 2021 Statistical Bulletin

² DAERA (2019) Northern Ireland Environmental Statistics Annual Report 2019 Issue 11 'Sulphur Dioxide'

³ NISRA (online) Census: Central heating - 2011 and 2021 TS030 (accessed 01/03/2024)

⁴ DAERA & NISRA (2023) Northern Ireland Greenhouse Gas Emissions 2021 Statistical Bulletin

⁵ DAERA (2019) Northern Ireland Environmental Statistics Annual Report 2019 Issue 11 'Greenhouse Gas Emissions'

⁶ DFE [online] GeoEnergy NI (found at <https://geoenergy.ni.org/what-is-geothermal-energy/#northern-irelands-geothermal-potential> [accessed 19.12.2023])

renewables, native planting schemes, integration of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and connection to walking and cycling routes.

Land Use Change

This relates to the sinks and sources of emissions from land use, land use change and forestry. The 2021 GHG Inventory reported the land use change as accounting for 10.4% of total GHG emissions in NI at 2.3MtCO₂e. As shown in Figure 5.10.1 there has been a relatively stable trend in the emissions from this sector, with a -17.5% decrease in emissions from the base year. It is gradually becoming more significant as a contributing sector to total GHG emissions with every new reporting period.

Waste Management

In 2021 the waste management sector was responsible for 3.5% of GHG emissions in NI. As shown in Figure 5.10.1 this sector has seen a considerable decrease in GHG emissions since 1990¹. Methane is a powerful GHG and is the dominant GHG emitted from the waste management sector due to landfilling practices². The introduction of methane capture in landfills, the closure of landfills and an increase in reusing, recycling and recovery practices have contributed to the decreasing trend in emissions from the sector.

Ards and North Down does not have any landfill sites currently operating. It has nine household recycling centres and 16 recycling centre bring sites³. Programs that reduce, reuse and recycle municipal waste are effective and high-impact means of reducing GHG emissions⁴. The LDP can support this through enabling the provision of sites for the management and processing of waste in sustainable locations.

Flooding

Climate change is expected to increase the frequency, severity and extent of flooding and extreme weather events, with increases in annual damage to residential properties and other buildings such as culturally valued buildings⁵. Flooding, which is discussed in more detail in section 5.11 '*Water Resources*', has been identified as '*potentially one of the most significant and urgent risks*' to NI⁶. Several settlements within the Borough are identified as having a moderate degree of flood risk and Bangor is an 'Area of Potentially Significant Flood Risk'.

It is becoming increasingly accepted that having fully functional wetland and coastal ecosystems will help to absorb excess water from flooding events and storm surges⁷. Development in areas with an identified flood risk not only places the development at risk, but may increase flood risk on adjacent sites and downstream, as well as increasing pressure on natural floodplains. This places risk on both the natural and built environment.

NICCAP2 includes the outcome objective that "*we have people, homes, buildings and communities that are resilient to the impacts of flooding and extremes of weather*". In addition to avoiding development in areas of flood risk, the introduction of SuDS within the built environment can also protect areas further downstream from flooding, as runoff is managed at source and slowed down through attenuation and storage. 'Soft' SuDS can deliver added benefits for this objective, where they can help improve water quality, biodiversity and create landscape features. 'Soft' SuDS components can also contribute to a

¹ DAERA & NISRA (2023) Northern Ireland Greenhouse Gas Emissions 2021 Statistical Bulletin

² DAERA (2019) Northern Ireland Environmental Statistics Annual Report 2019 Issue 11 'Greenhouse Gas Emissions'

³ Ards and North Down Borough Council [online] 'Bring Bank Centres' (found at

<https://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/resident/bins-and-recycling/bring-bank-centres> [accessed 19.12.2023])

⁴ USEPA, Solid Waste Management and Greenhouse Gases: A Life-Cycle Assessment of Emissions and Sinks, 3rd Edition. 2006.

⁵ DAERA (2019) Northern Ireland Climate Change Adaptation Programme 2019-2024

⁶ DoE (2014) Northern Ireland Climate Change Adaptation Programme 2014-2019

⁷ SEPA (2016) Natural Flood Management Handbook

reduction and/or sequestration of carbon¹. SuDS are more adaptable to changing environments and weather conditions when compared to regular underground drains².

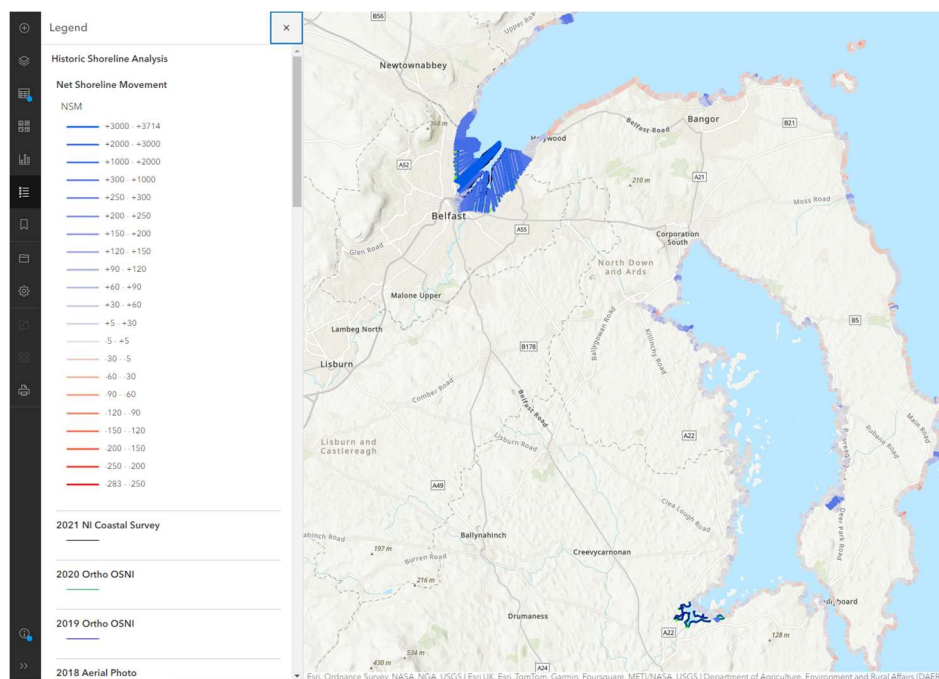
Coastal Flooding/Erosion

The Borough has an extensive coastline, totalling more than 115 miles. Coasts are dynamic environments that change due to natural forces and man-made pressures; climate change is expected to exacerbate these impacts. The UKCP18 indicates that sea level rise will continue to occur in the UK regardless of future GHG scenarios and that an increase in both the frequency, and magnitude of, extreme water levels around our coastlines is expected. These forces can also add to coastal land instability.

NICCAP2 advises that “sea level rise affects NI’s coasts by increasing flood risks and vulnerability to storm surges. It can negatively impact our coastal economy, communities, buildings and essential infrastructure, all of which are intimately linked to the health, safety and wellbeing of people”. Coastal change including erosion is a feature of much of the Borough’s coastline with ‘coastal change hotspots’ such as at Mount Stewart and Kearney already evident³. Settlements bring their own development pressures, but coastal settlements will have additional issues to consider.

In NI, there has been a lack of baseline coastal and marine data and no legislation in place to specifically address the issue of coastal erosion or assign responsibility for it. As a consequence, the nature and scale of the issues arising from coastal erosion in NI are currently not definitively known; coastal protection policy is reactive, focusing on coastal protection rather than coastal erosion risk management.

Figure 5.10.3: NI Coastal Erosion High Level Risk Appraisal (2018)



Source: NI Historical Shoreline Analysis (found at <https://www.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=1d7bba4c40b541a486c874dee45c7046> (accessed 01/03/2024))

An initial step towards establishing a coordinated strategy to consider and address coastal erosion in NI was the publication in 2018 of a Baseline Study and Gap Analysis by DAERA

¹ SusDrain ‘Carbon reduction and sequestration’ (found at <https://www.susdrain.org/delivering-suds/using-suds/benefits-of-suds/Carbon-reduction-and-sequestration> accessed 03/04/2020)

² Ashley, RM, Walker, AL, D’Arcy, B et al. (5 more authors) (2015) UK sustainable drainage systems: past, present and future. Proceedings of ICE - Civil Engineering, 168 (3). pp. 125-130

³ Ards and North Down Local Development Plan Position Paper The Coast

and DfI¹. This has been followed by a Historical Shoreline Analysis Survey², also commissioned by DAERA. The primary objective from this project was to acquire historical shoreline information for all of the Northern Ireland coastline. Having this detailed understanding of the coast's shoreline position and geometry over annual to decadal time periods is essential in any management of the coast. The historical shoreline analysis was based on all available Ordnance Survey maps and aerial imagery information. Analysis looked at position and geometry over annual to decadal time periods, providing a dynamic picture of how the coastline has changed since the start of the early 1800s.

Figure 5.10.3 shows an excerpt from this survey; however, it should be noted that further study is required to determine more specific risk areas.

Inappropriate coastal development and activities can affect coastal habitat and its physical integrity. This can happen when the natural movement of the shore or dunes is removed or impeded, resulting in 'coastal squeeze'. Coastal squeeze is defined as 'the loss of natural habitats, or deterioration of their quality, arising from anthropogenic structures or actions preventing the landward transgression of those habitats that would otherwise naturally occur, in response to sea level rise in conjunction with other coastal processes'³. Coastal squeeze affects habitat on the seaward side of existing structures.

Sea level rise and loss of natural flood protection can also pose risks to heritage in the coastal zone.

The NICCAP2 includes the outcome objectives that *"we have coastal communities, habitats, landforms and infrastructure that are resilient to impacts of climate change"*.

A new approach to coastal development is to work with nature rather than against it and respond to coastal realignments with soft or natural approaches. The Borough area also has a significant number of coastal paths and parks for recreation, as well as undeveloped areas that can be accessed. These areas may be at risk from erosion and flooding that is likely to worsen with rising sea levels and increased storm events. One solution to help coordinate action in these areas could be to create Coastal Change Management Areas. In GB, Shoreline Management Plans (SMPs) are widely applied; these are a non-statutory tool which can be used to help manage the risks of coastal erosion and coastal flooding in the specific Plan area.

Biodiversity

In addition to the pressures on coastal habitats posed by rising sea levels discussed above, the NI Evidence Report⁴ has highlighted that climate change presents both potential risk and opportunities to landscapes / landscape character and our soils and land types. NICCAP2 states that *"adaptation is vital in ensuring resilient soils and that land types are preserved, while in turn contributing to building the resilience of our ecosystems and communities that depend upon them"*.

Climate change is expected to impact on local biodiversity, as changing climatic factors will cause habitats to alter and species to move. In certain locations, these changes may enable non-native invasive species to thrive and/or may cause native species to relocate in an attempt to stay within their preferred climate. NICCAP2 identifies that there are risks to species and habitats due to inability to respond to climatic conditions. Local biodiversity will need green and blue infrastructure, including buffer zones around designated sites, to aid their movement in response to climate change. Feedback from public engagement meetings linked to the Community Plan has already highlighted a belief in the importance of preserving peatlands because of their carbon storage and flood protection benefits.

¹ DAERA & DfI [Amey Consulting with HR Wallingford] (2018) Baseline Study and Gap Analysis of Coastal Erosion Risk Management NI

² (<https://www.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=1d7bba4c40b541a486c874dee45c7046>).

³ Gov.uk (2021) What is Coastal Squeeze

⁴ Committee on Climate Change (2021) 'Evidence for the third UK Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA3) Summary for Northern Ireland.

Peatlands also have specialised plants and associated fauna and avifauna. NICCAP2 has also identified the Forest Expansion Scheme among its actions to achieve outcome objective NC3 “*we have soils and land types that are resilient to the impacts of climate change.*” This scheme encourages the creation of new forest blocks of at least 5 hectares and, in addition to providing increased carbon capture, NICCAP2 identifies secondary benefits such as improved biodiversity and enhanced ability of individual species to endure climate change.

Likely Evolution of the Baseline without the Local Development Plan

The predicted effects of climate change include a greater chance of warmer, wetter winters and hotter, drier summers along with increases in extreme weather events with higher intensity rainfall events, storm events and increased flood risk. All these weather events bring with them potential risks. The Council’s LDP Position Paper ‘Environmental Resilience’ also refers to the effect these potential threats can have on the ‘*overall mental health of a population*’ and how the ageing population of the Borough may be particularly vulnerable. There is an opportunity with the LDP to develop policies that can help combat climate change as well as improve physical health and mental well-being. These policy measures could promote active travel, provide green and blue infrastructure, and holistically deliver lower carbon emissions.

In the absence of a new LDP, there could be fewer opportunities to apply land use planning to help integrate holistically sustainable development patterns with measures to help combat climate change. This could include reducing or avoiding risks to infrastructure and people. There could be fewer opportunities to reduce GHG emissions from transport and energy usage. It could also become increasingly difficult to locate appropriate renewable energy projects concerning both infrastructure and users. Likewise, there may be fewer opportunities to develop more resilient communities that can cope with the impacts of climate change, including flooding, extreme heat, water shortages and erosion.

Key Sustainability Issues for Climate Change

- CO2 accounts for the largest proportion of total GHG emissions in NI. The LDP should support a low-carbon future in anticipation of new energy and climate change policies, as well as evolving and emerging energy technologies, including planning for electric charge up points.
- The LDP should promote and support the reuse and retrofit of existing buildings as a sustainable approach in the context of carbon cost and should encourage the integration of measures to enable adaptation to the effects of climate change into new development.
- There is an opportunity to plan for and adapt for climate change by promoting and incorporating measures such as green/blue infrastructure, sustainable drainage systems and other measures that increase resilience.
- There is an opportunity to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by spatially influencing new and existing development so that journey times are reduced, connectivity improved and appropriate sources of renewable energy are available.
- Measures are needed to help people, organisations and nature to cope with the predicted impacts of climate change – flooding, coastal change (including coastal erosion), habitat loss, water pollution (urban, rural and marine) - from run off, higher temperatures and extreme weather events.
- The agricultural sector is a significant contributor to GHG emissions and opportunities to reduce emissions within the scope of the LDP need to be considered.
- There is a need to encourage and increase opportunities for active and sustainable travel modes across the Borough, to help reduce reliance on the car and to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the transport sector.

- Natural gas has superseded oil as the most common fuel used for central heating in the Borough. The incorporation of suitable low carbon energy resources for heating homes and businesses, including geothermal energy, should be encouraged.
- It is likely that sea level rise, coastal erosion and storm surges will become significant problems for the Borough Council to manage.
- There is a higher than average reusing/recycling/composting rate for the Borough Council relative to other Councils. The waste management hierarchy and the proximity principle should continue to be used to guide waste management facilities and practices based on the principles of sustainable development.
- The absence of a consistent and comprehensive coastal erosion baseline data in Northern Ireland means that it is difficult to identify areas that are at risk. Once suitable evidence is available, Coastal Change Management Areas could be identified (by the relevant authority) and policy established in those areas to inform on the likely sustainability of any proposed development and to help manage coastal change over time.
- It is important to protect habitats, coastal areas, floodplains and peatlands, which act as natural adaptation measures for climate change, as well as providing habitat for local biodiversity.
- Ensuring buffer zones exist around designated sites and priority habitats should help enable movement of species due to a changing climate.
- A cross-sectoral approach involving various stakeholders will be needed to further develop and deliver Climate Change Action Plans.

5.11 Water

5.11.1 Review of Policies, Plans, Programmes and Strategies

This topic encompasses water as a resource for ecological services, water supply and treatment. It also considers the management of water storage and flow, flood risk and measures to avoid or manage flood risk.

Regional legislation, plans and strategies seek to protect the quality and supply of water to maintain natural resources and protect human health. The Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017 require waterbodies to be protected from deterioration and, where necessary and practicable, to be restored to 'good' status. The Groundwater Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009 include criteria for the assessment of 'good' chemical status and for identifying and reversing upward trends in pollution of groundwater. Nutrient Action Programme Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2019 and Pollution Prevention and Control (Industrial Emissions) Regulations (NI) 2013 also require the implementation of standards for the control and prevention of pollution of water by nitrates from agricultural sources and phosphorus and other pollutants from agricultural, industrial and waste water sources.

The Urban Waste Water Treatment (UWWT) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007 aim to reduce the pollution of freshwater, estuarine and coastal waters by domestic sewage and industrial wastewater (collectively known as urban waste water). These Regulations set minimum standards for the collection, treatment and discharge of urban waste water. Minimum standards for the provision of sewerage systems and treatment of sewage are set according to the population served by sewage treatment works, and the sensitivity of receiving waters. The Water Environment (Floods Directive) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009 require flood risk to be assessed and mapped and management plans to be developed for the most significant flood risk areas.

In addition to the above Regulations, which were originally developed to transpose European Directives regionally, regulations are also present to control the use of water through either abstraction or impoundment and to protect water supplies. There are also a number of pieces of drainage legislation to control water levels and flows.

Three primary River Basin Districts (RBD) have been identified in Northern Ireland: the North Eastern (NE), the Neagh – Bann (NB) and the North Western (NW) RBDs. The draft 3rd cycle River Basin Management Plan for NI was published in April 2021 but as of December 2023 has not yet been adopted. River Basin Management is a key element in implementing the WFD Regulations, taking 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, as well as wetlands which are directly associated with ground or surface water.

NI also maintains a register of protected areas. The register consists of an inventory of protected area sites representing the protected area categories outlined below:

- Areas designated for the protection of habitats or species
- Groundwater dependent terrestrial ecosystem sites
- Bathing Waters
- Shellfish waters;
- Groundwater and Surface water Drinking Water Protected Areas;
- Urban wastewater Sensitive Areas; and
- Nutrients Action Programme (Total Territory Approach).

The WFD Regulations include coastal waters, however the UK Marine Strategy also seeks to achieve 'good environmental status' (GES)¹ of marine waters. It includes key objectives

¹ GES is defined in the MSFD as: "The environmental status of marine waters where these provide ecologically diverse and dynamic oceans and seas which are clean, healthy and productive" (Article 3).

that are relevant to LDP in respect of contaminants (including contaminants in seafood); marine litter and underwater noise. The draft Marine Plan includes among its core policies the requirement for public authorities to consider any potential impact from proposals on natural heritage, marine litter and marine noise. It also has a key activity policy supporting aquaculture. As Ards and North Down is connected to the inshore marine area¹ via its coastline and watercourses, protection of water quality on land and in coastal areas will also protect water quality in the marine area. Marine policies are also considered under the 'Natural Environment' topic (Section 5.12) in this Scoping Report.

Every six years, the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) in partnership with the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) produces a River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) for each River Basin District within NI. The third RBMP cycle extends from 2021 – 2027. The WFD Regulations require action to meet good ecological and chemical status and prevent deterioration of our water bodies. Each RBMP therefore sets out the current state of our water environment and the measures to be put in place to achieve further improvements to the water environment over their six-year period.

It is essential that RBMPs are integrated with a wide range of strategies and initiatives impacting on the water environment in Northern Ireland. This exploits commonality across regional, national and international requirements, ensuring efficient and cost effective delivery. A Long Term Water Strategy has been developed by the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) in partnership with Northern Ireland Water (NIW), DAERA and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA). The Strategy aims to encourage a sustainable and integrated approach to managing the different water needs within a catchment, while promoting regional development without compromising the environment or increasing flood risk.

DAERA is working with the agricultural sector to promote good practice in nutrient management and safer, more effective slurry spreading. The Nitrates Action Programme has been a key element in providing safeguards for the water environment since 2007 and farmers' cooperation has been a key factor in the success of this scheme. This is the main tool for reducing diffuse pollution through the Nitrates Action Programme and Nutrient Management Plans. This has delivered significant improvements in water quality in the last 10-15 years, reducing water quality failures due to nutrients from around 60% to 40%, however increasing nitrate concentrations were reported in 30.8 % of RBMP monitoring sites across NI in 2018².

The Quality of Bathing Water Regulations (Northern Ireland) implements quality standards for a number of parameters in identified bathing waters, to safeguard public health and protect the environment. The most important of these are the standards relating to the coliform and streptococcal groups of bacteria, which, in general, can be taken as an indication of the amount of sewage or other faecal contaminants present. In addition to monitoring the bathing waters, DAERA Marine and Fisheries Division monitors rivers which run into the sea at beaches. Pollution problems at beaches often arise from within river catchments.

A Flood Risk Management Plan (FRMP) is a requirement of the Water Environment (Floods Directive) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009. The FRMP has been developed to align with the six year cycle of the RBMP. The FRMP highlights the flood hazards and risks in 12 Areas of Potential Significant Flood Risk (APSFR) identified within NI and sets out a framework in which measures to manage flood risk will be delivered or planned for at a local level. In addition to the APSFRs, there are a further nine 'Transitional Areas of Potential Significant Flood Risk' (TAPSFR) in NI.

¹ DAERA (2018) Draft Marine Plan for NI - "The Northern Ireland marine area is made up of an inshore and an offshore region. The marine area comprises all marine waters including sea bed, subsoil, sea loughs and tidal rivers, so far as the tide flows at Mean High Water Spring Tide".

² DAERA (2021) Draft River Basin Management Plan for Northern Ireland 2021-2027

DAERA's draft Environment Strategy (2021) seeks to achieve the outcome of 'excellent air, water, land and neighbourhood quality'. Key actions of this strategy include investment in sewage infrastructure, with outcomes including a reduction in levels of nitrates and phosphorus in NI waterbodies.

The fundamental policy message arising from the SPPS is that the most effective means of managing flood risk is to avoid the risk, by locating new buildings and infrastructure outside flood risk areas. The LDP should ensure that land identified as being at risk of flooding is not zoned for development. Such development would be at an unacceptable risk of flooding, may cause flooding elsewhere and may impair the natural function of the floodplain in storing flood water. The Council should adopt a precautionary approach to the identification of land through the LDP process and the determination of development proposals, in those areas susceptible to flooding where there is a lack of precise information on present day flood risk or climate change flood risk.

The RDS 2035 includes protective measures for water such as:

- Adopt grey water recycling;
- Minimise development in areas at risk from flooding from rivers, the sea and surface water run-off;
- Promote a more sustainable approach to the provision of water and sewerage services and flood risk management;
- Integrate water and land-use planning;
- Manage future water demand; and
- Encourage sustainable surface water management.

The SPPS states that planning authorities '*should encourage developers to use sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) as the preferred drainage solution*'. The Strategy for Promoting the Use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) also encourages the incorporation of measures to ameliorate the impacts of development on water quality and flow.

The Council's Corporate Plan 2024-2028 has the vision of 'A Sustainable Borough' and includes "An environmentally resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets" among its strategic outcomes.

"*The Big Plan*" Community Plan recognises that it is important that "*the quality of the physical environment (natural and built) is managed to ensure natural spaces are protected and infrastructure such as roads, water, coastal defences and housing work in harmony.*" Protecting and enhancing water quality in the Borough underpins all of these themes.

5.11.2 Baseline Information

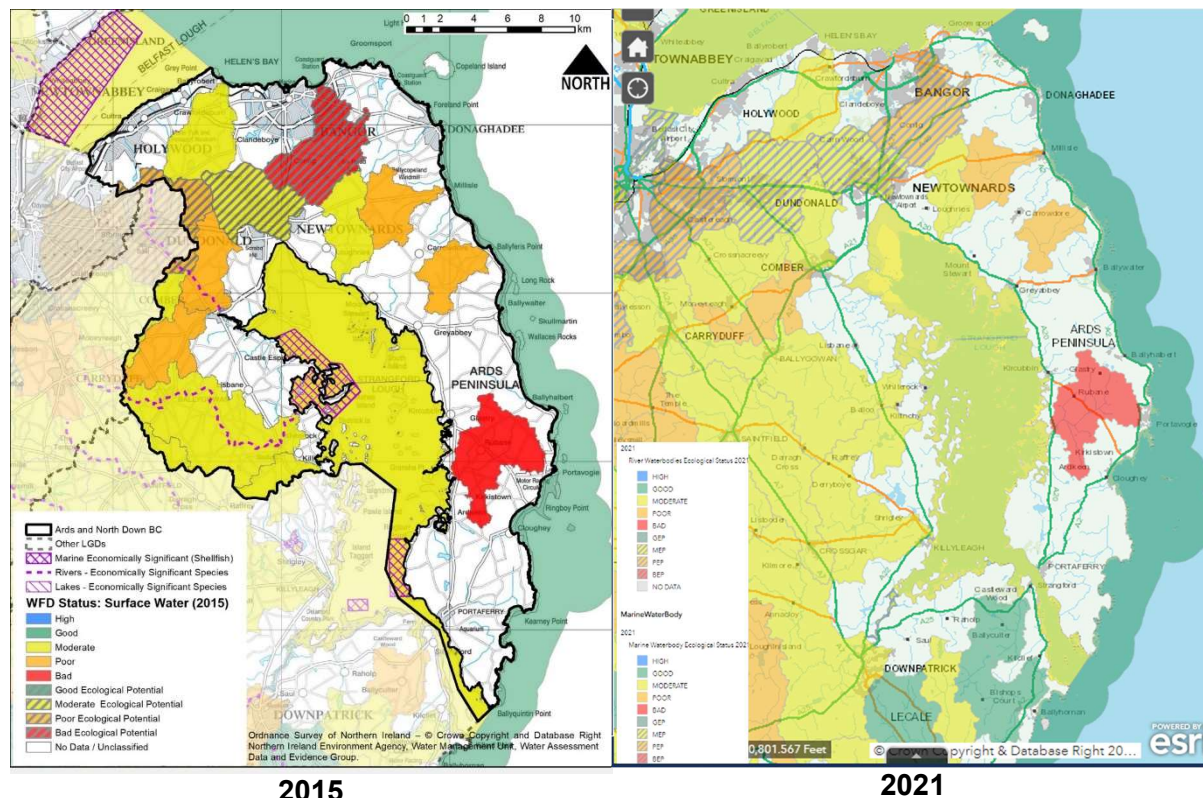
River Basin Management Plan and

The RBMP requires action to meet 'good' (or better) ecological and chemical status and prevent deterioration of our water bodies. 'Good' status is assessed using a broad range of parameters for water quality (such as nutrients and oxygen levels); aquatic biology (including plants, aquatic insects and fish) and physical environment (such as river flows and habitat). Classification of water bodies assists in planning what measures might be required for improvements. The RBMP also recognises that some water bodies have been changed to such a degree that they can no longer be restored to their original condition without compromising their current use. These are called heavily modified (HMWBs) or artificial water bodies (AWBs). HMWBs and AWBs are classified according to their ecological potential rather than status, with the objective to achieve 'good ecological potential' (GEP).

The principal river systems in the Borough are the Crawfordsburn and Ballyholme Rivers which drain into Belfast Lough and the Enler, Blackwater and Blackstaff Rivers which drain into Strangford Lough. There are also numerous smaller river catchments which drain into these Loughs and into the North Channel.

The water quality status figures published at the conclusion of the first cycle of RBMP in 2015 showed that 37% of Northern Ireland's water bodies met 'good' status¹. Classification tools and standards, as well as water body boundaries have changed during the first River Basin Cycle, therefore it's not possible to make a direct comparison between 2009 and 2015 data.

Figure 5.11.1: Water Framework Directive overall classification 2015 and 2021



Source: DAERA WMU Digital Dataset Downloads (Published 06 June 2017) and DAERA NIEA Catchment Data Map Viewer (accessed 1/3/24)

There are 14 river waterbodies (including artificial and heavily modified waterbodies) in Ards and North Down. Figure 5.11.1 shows the overall ecological status classification of the waterbodies within Ards and North Down at the conclusion of the first WFD cycle in 2015 and their most recent published status update in 2021. Substantial areas of Ards and North Down have not been assigned a catchment status, as the watercourse catchments are below the size threshold (10km²) for characterisation. These areas are shown as white/transparent in Figure 5.11.1.

Table 5.11.1 summarises the 2015 classification results for river waterbodies. The Borough has no lake waterbodies designated under the WFD.

¹ A statistical report to update the position on water quality status since the start of the last cycle in 2015 was published on 26th September 2018. However the spatial data to accompany these interim results was not yet available at the time of writing of this chapter and consequently these have not been used in reporting on the baseline.

Table 5.11.1: Summary of 2015 and 2021 overall classification of river water bodies

River Water Bodies			Heavily Modified Water Bodies*		
2015	2021		2015	2021	
11	11	Total Number of RWB	3	3	Total Number of HMWB
-	-	High Eco. Status	-	-	Good Eco. Potential
-	-	Good Eco. Status	1	2	Moderate Eco. Potential
6	7	Moderate Eco. Status	1	1	Poor Eco. Potential
4	3	Poor Eco. Status	1	0	Bad Eco. Potential
1	1	Bad Eco. Status			
0	0	No data / unclassified			

*includes river and lake waterbodies

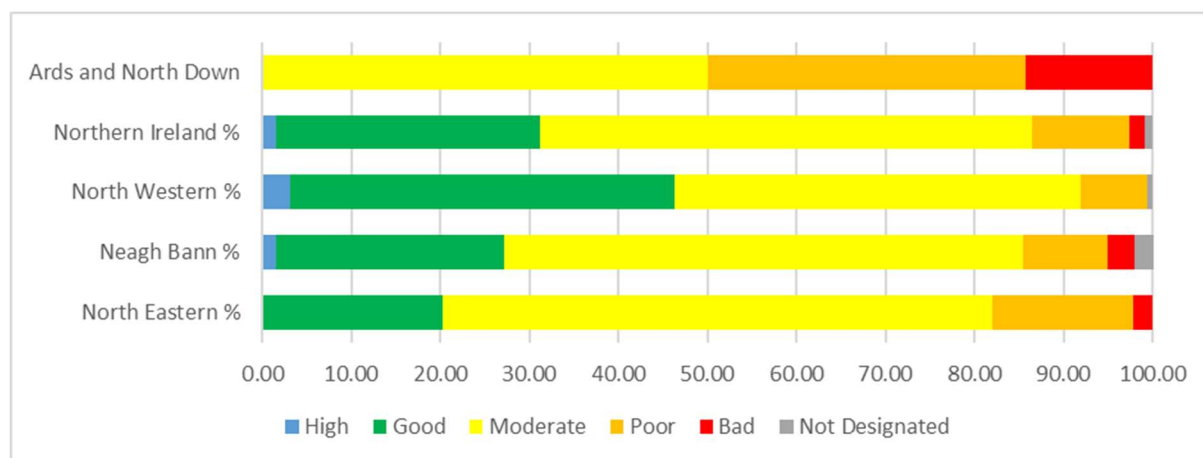
Source: DAERA WMU Digital Dataset Downloads (Published 06 June 2017) and NIEA Catchment Data Map Viewer (accessed 1/2/24)

There are three heavily modified river waterbodies in Ards and North Down. Ballyholme River, Cully's Burn and the Enler River (Dundonald). These are classified as heavily modified due to their having concrete banks in urban areas and being straightened and culverted along parts of their length.

Figure 5.11.2 shows that Ards and North Down had poorer river water quality in 2015 than the overall Northern Ireland average. None of the river waterbodies in the Borough (including HMWBs) have achieved 'good' or 'high' ecological status (or good ecological potential) in comparison with the average of 31% for all river water bodies in NI.

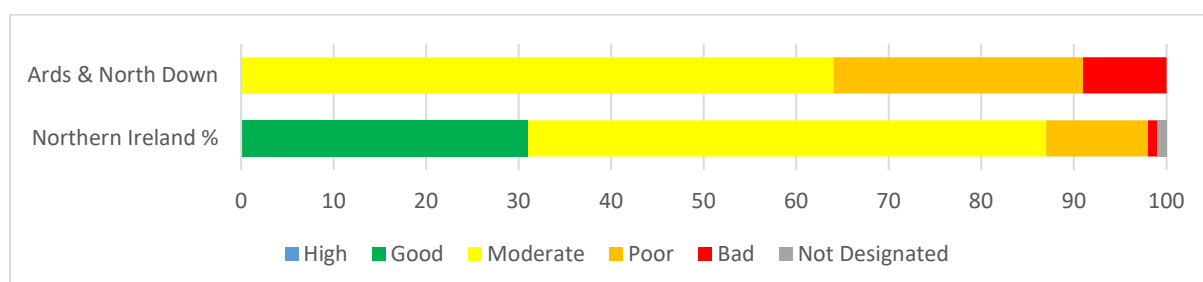
Figure 5.11.2: Water Framework Directive overall classification (% River Waterbodies), 2015 and 2021

2015



Source: DAERA WMU Digital Datasets and Northern Ireland Reported Water Body Status & Objective Figures 2015 (Published 07/11/2017)

2021



Source: DAERA Water Framework Directive Statistics Report December 2021

Ards and North Down also adjoins three coastal waterbodies. These are listed below in Table 5.11.2.

Table 5.11.2: Summary of 2015 overall classification of coastal water bodies

Waterbody Name	Status (2015)	Ecological Status (2021)
Belfast Lough Outer	Good	Moderate
Belfast Lough Inner	Moderate	Moderate
Strangford Lough North	Moderate	Moderate
Strangford Lough South	Moderate	Moderate
Ards Peninsula	Good	Good

Two out of the five coastal waterbodies, Belfast Lough Outer and Ards Peninsula, achieved 'good' status in 2015; this has reduced to one coastal waterbody in 2021. Belfast Lough Inner, Strangford Lough North, and Strangford Lough South, all of which contain designated Shellfish Areas, achieved 'moderate' status.

In May 2019, an assessment of progress towards GES was published by UK Governments. The assessment showed that of the 15 indicators for determining GES of UK waters, only four have been met: eutrophication, contaminants, contaminants in seafood, and changes in hydrographical conditions. Five have been partially met: cetaceans, seals, pelagic habitats, food webs, and noise pollution. Six have not been met: birds, fish, litter, benthic habitats, non-indigenous species, commercial fish and shellfish.

As part of the River Basin Planning process, a Programme of Measures (POM)¹ has been established for each RBD to detail the improvements required to meet 'good' ecological status, the actions required and the delivery mechanisms. The POM aims to address the key pressures by concentrating efforts on those pressures that pose the greatest threat to the water environment.

The draft 3rd cycle RBMP and Significant Water Management Issues Consultation Report² indicate that the most significant pressures on water quality are from the release of the nutrients phosphorus and nitrogen from agricultural sources. Urban Development is the second significant pressure on water quality and is a result of sewage treatment ranging from the NIW sewerage system, private wastewater treatment and single house domestic discharges. Nutrient enrichment has been identified in the RBMP as a principal reason for failure in lake, transitional and coastal waterbodies as it is linked to failures in diatoms, macrophytes and soluble reactive phosphorus, which have occurred in many waterbodies either individually or in combination.

Storm water is a significant pressure on the sewerage infrastructure where there are combined systems carrying both foul and storm water and misconnections can pollute local streams, rivers and beaches.

Industrial activities can adversely affect the quality of groundwater and surface waters when there are unregulated discharges from industrial processes to the water environment. If not regulated and controlled appropriately, industrial discharges can result in significant impacts to the aquatic environment.

Other pressures may include reductions in water quantity and flow, the physical condition of the water environment (in respect of man made changes to the natural habitat of rivers, lakes, estuaries and coastal waters), the presence and spread of non native invasive species, chemicals, forestry, contaminated land, plastic pollution and any other factors that affect fish populations and habitat, such as sediment.

¹ DAERA List of second cycle supporting documents for 2nd cycle River Basin Management Plans 2015. Date published: 03 August 2017. <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/list-second-cycle-supporting-documents-2nd-cycle-river-basin-management-plans-2015>

² DAERA (2019) Planning for the third cycle River Basin Management Plan 2021-2027 - Consultation on Significant Water Management Issues

At the Northern Ireland level there has been a gradual trend towards fewer and less severe pollution incidents and improved compliance for private and trade discharge consents since 2001.

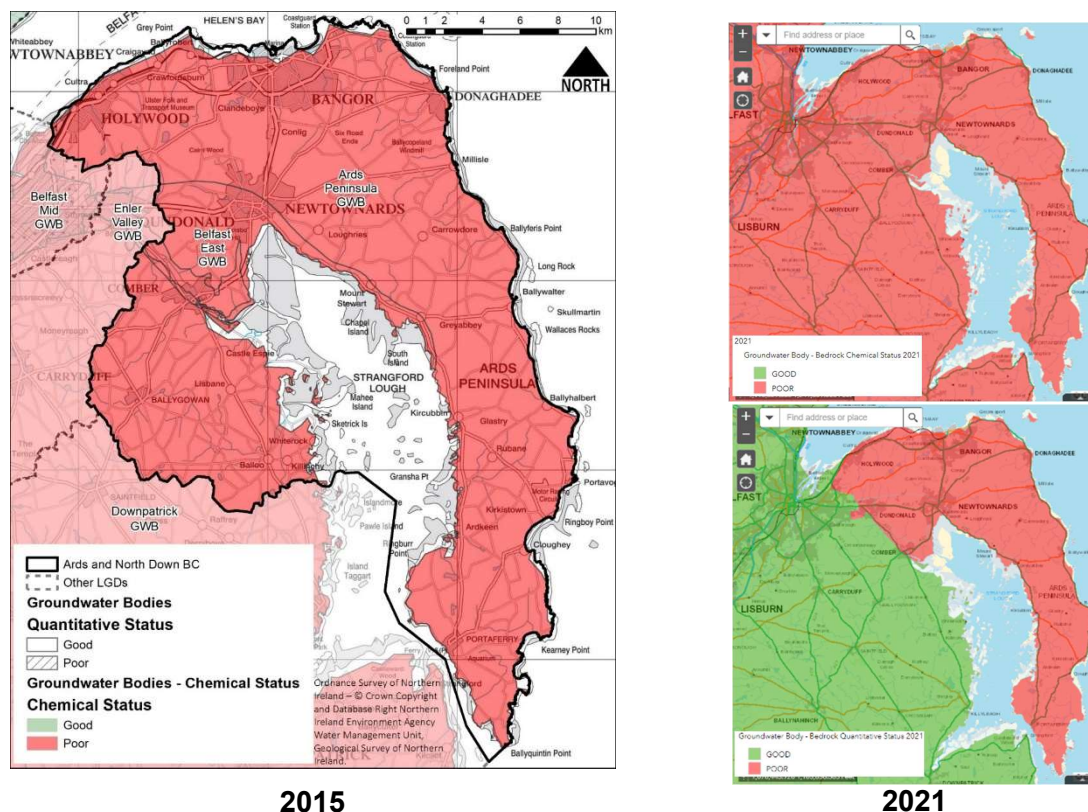
Desktop studies and consultation have not identified any active catchment management projects in the Borough that have the aim of improving water quality.

Groundwater

There are four groundwater bodies intersecting Ards and North Down, shown in Figure 5.11.3. The Belfast Mid groundwater body also covers a small portion (c.0.6km²) of the Borough. Of these waterbodies, none were classified as overall 'good' status at the end of the first RBMP cycle in 2015. All of the groundwater bodies in the Borough have been classified as having poor chemical status in both 2015 and 2021, but in the east of the Borough, in 2021, the quantitative status is good.

The NIEA has indicated in correspondence sought as part of this scoping exercise that the main pressure in the Ards Peninsula, Belfast East, Downpatrick and Enler groundwater bodies is diffuse phosphorus, which in turn contributes to phosphorus loading in surface water because of groundwater baseflow contributions. Possible sources include agricultural or septic tanks. Saline intrusion (increased chloride concentrations) has been detected in the Newtownards area. Increased Arsenic concentrations have also been measured in the Newtownards and Comber areas, however it is not clear yet whether this is due to anthropogenic or natural reasons.

Figure 5.11.3: Groundwater Status, 2015 (left) and 2021 (right)



Source: DAERA WMU Digital Dataset Downloads (Accessed 02/03/18) and DAERA NIEA Catchment Data Map Viewer (accessed 01/03/23)

The draft 3rd cycle RBMP identifies nutrients and other contaminants as being a main pressure on groundwater, with agricultural activities and sewage related problems identified as a source. Nutrients (or other contaminants) soak into the soil and are washed into the unsaturated zone of the aquifer until they reach the water table. Contaminants travel with the

natural groundwater flow or altered groundwater flow (due to a groundwater abstraction at a pumped borehole) until they reach a receptor.

The GSNI has indicated in correspondence sought as part of this scoping exercise that groundwater can be viewed as a natural resource that requires careful protection and as a water source that can be used for growth and economic development. Businesses and industry can use groundwater as a private water supply source at their own premises, making significant savings on mains water costs and increasing the resilience of the business. Recent data and studies show that between Dundonald, Newtownards and Comber, the properties of this aquifer are very favourable to large scale groundwater abstraction without any negative environmental impacts. Boreholes drilled in Newtownards tend to access a naturally pressurised part of the aquifer which causes the groundwater to flow out from boreholes at the surface without the need for additional pumping.

Drinking Water Protected Areas

Catchments used for the abstraction of drinking water and supplying Water Treatment Works (WTW) are included on the WFD Register of Protected areas. There are no surface water catchments to which this applies in Ards and North Down, however all of the groundwater bodies in Ards and North Down are on the Register of Protected Areas.

Economically Significant Aquatic Species – Shellfish

Waters supporting shellfish receive additional protection and are monitored for specific pollutants and priority hazardous substances. There are two Shellfish Water Protected Areas within Ards and North Down, Marlfield Bay and Paddy's Point and Reagh Bay, shown below in Figure 5.11.4. Two further Shellfish Water Protected Areas, Belfast Lough and Skate Rock, are located in waters outside the LGD boundary, but have the potential to be influenced by activities occurring within Ards and North Down.

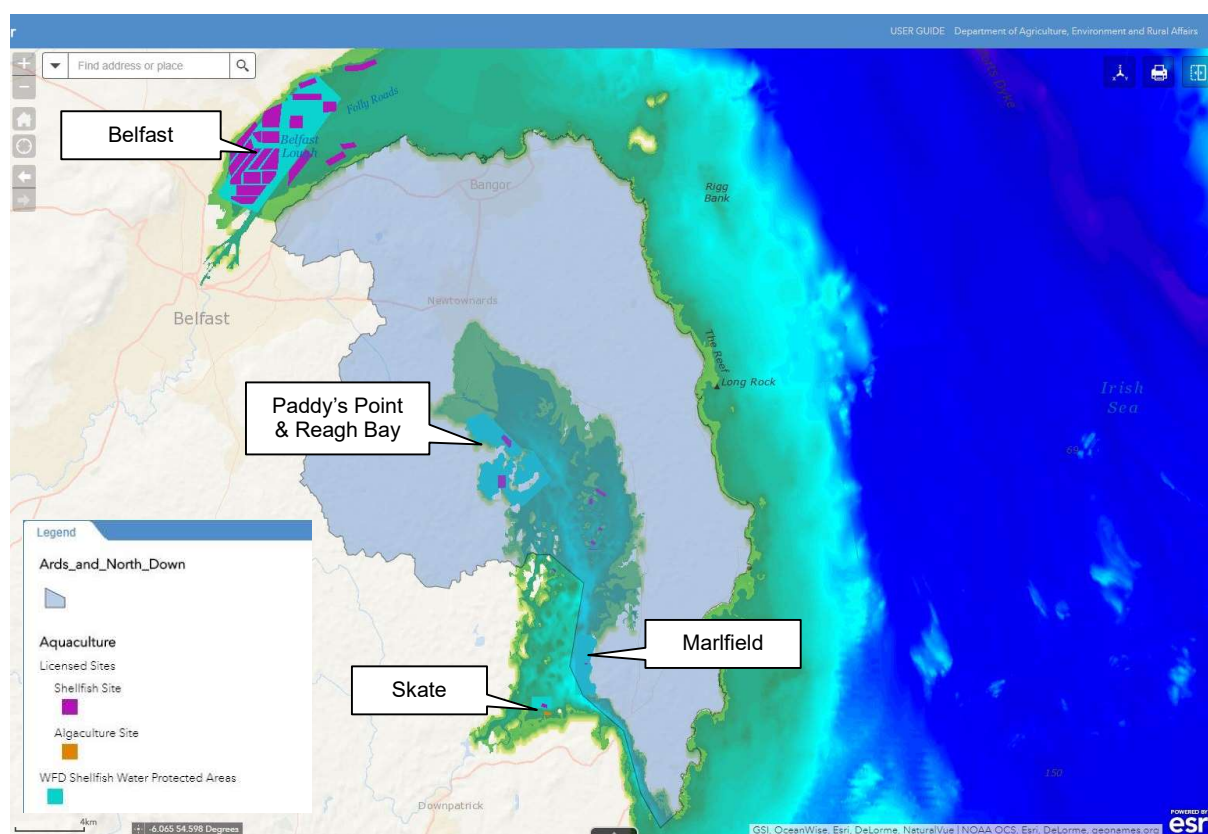
Ten aquaculture sites are licensed in Strangford Lough, of which eight are inside the boundary of Ards and North Down. These sites are mainly licensed for the cultivation of mussels, although two sites are given to oyster production. The 21 aquaculture sites that are currently licensed in Belfast Lough are for the harvesting of mussels.

Six of the licensed aquaculture sites in Strangford Lough and four of the licensed sites in Belfast Lough are outside the Shellfish Water Protected Areas.

Monitoring programmes are in place to assess the status of Shellfish Water Protected Areas. A suite of determinants is used to determine ecological status and the overall objective under the regulations. Compliance with guideline standards is determined by measuring *E. coli* and other prescribed contaminants in shellfish flesh. It can be seen from the table below that Skate Rock is the only production area to consistently met guidelines and is awarded 'A' class (the highest rated) microbiological status.

Paddy's Point & Reagh Bay and Skate Rock Shellfish Water Protected Areas have achieved the required standard since statistics began being published in 2008, as has Marlfield Bay (prior to 2013 – not shown in Figure 5.11.5 below). However, shellfish from Belfast Lough have not been able to achieve the required microbiological standards. Skate Rock is the only production area in NI to have been awarded 'A' class (the highest rated) microbiological status for 2018.

Figure 5.11.4: Aquaculture & Shellfish



Source: DAERA Northern Ireland Marine Mapviewer <https://apps.d.aera-ni.gov.uk/marinemapviewer/>

Figure 5.11.5: Summary of Shellfish Waters Directive Compliance with Guideline E. Coli Standard

Shellfish Water	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
Skate Rock								
Marfield								
Paddy's Point								
Belfast Lough								

	Met Guideline
	Did not Meet Guideline
	Not Designated or Not in Production

Source: NI Environmental Statistics Report 2023¹ data tables

Pollution Reduction Programmes² were published in 2015 for Belfast Lough and Strangford Lough. Belfast Lough suffers from persistent nutrient inputs from diffuse catchment loads, which prevented it from achieving its WFD objective of 'good' ecological status in 2015.

In Strangford Lough, the main pollution sources come from continuous and intermittent discharges throughout the lough. Of the discharges flowing into Strangford Lough, Ballyrickard Wastewater Treatment Works (WwTW) (which serves the catchment areas of Newtownards, Comber and surrounding areas) has the highest discharge volume. There are also various other non-point pollution sources associated with agricultural land use, tourism and wildfowl.

¹ DAERA Northern Ireland Environmental Statistics Report 2017

² DAERA Pollution Reduction Programmes 2015 <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/pollution-reduction-programmes-2015>

Higher annual rainfall with more intense episodes, which may occur more frequently in the future due to the effects of climate change (see section 5.10), may increase loads of diffuse pollutants from both urban and rural areas. This may increase loading of pollutants to the sea and increase the risk of the failure of microbiological standards in both shellfish and bathing waters.

Economically Significant Aquatic Species – Freshwater Fish

Ards and North Down has approximately 40km of rivers on the protected areas register for freshwater fish. These are the Blackwater (Ards) and Enler (Comber) Rivers. There are no protected lakes in Ards and North Down. Only 6 out of the 19 (32%) river waterbodies in the NE RBD that are monitored for fish population or habitat achieved 'good' or 'high' status for this element over the first WFD planning cycle. Failures in fish ecology can indicate a wide range of pressures, such as from physical modifications and abstraction and flow regulation.

Nutrient Sensitive Areas

A total territory approach has been adopted in Northern Ireland for Nitrates. Under the UWWT Regulations, waters may be identified as sensitive areas if found to be eutrophic or likely to become eutrophic if protective action is not taken. There are seven UWWT sensitive areas in the Borough:

- Paddy's Point and Reagh Bay Shellfish Water
- Ballyholme Bathing Water
- Ballyholme Bathing Water Catchment
- Inner Belfast Lough
- Inner Belfast Lough Catchment
- River Enler Catchment
- Strangford Lough (North End) Catchment.

There has been a trend toward significant reductions in mean nitrate concentrations in groundwater. Long-term trends show that average nitrate concentrations in rivers in Northern Ireland were predominantly decreasing or stable over the 20-year period, 1992-2012, which may be attributed to the measures implemented through the Nitrates Action Programme. The 3rd cycle draft RBMP reports that annual average nitrate concentrations at common surface freshwater monitoring stations across NI were increasing in 30.8% of sites between the two reporting periods, 2012-2015 and 2018. Most of the increases were located in catchments with higher intensity farming practices, including Strangford.

Bathing Waters

Ards and North Down has seven beaches designated under the Bathing Water Quality Directive¹ and two candidate beaches. Designated and candidate beaches are monitored through the bathing season. A bathing water profile is published annually to allow the public to make an informed choice before bathing.

Threats to bathing water quality for bathing waters are broadly divided into three categories: waste water (sewage) treatment works discharges, waste water systems in urban areas and rural source pollution, including agriculture. Other threats include dogs, horses, litter and fly tipping. The annual averaged bathing water results over the 2020-2023 seasons are summarised below in Table 5.11.3.

Table 5.11.3: Bathing Water Quality Overall Classifications 2020 – 2023

	2020	2021	2022	2023
Helen's Bay	Excellent	Excellent	Good	Good
Crawfordsburn	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Good
<i>Brompton Bay (candidate)</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	Poor
Ballyholme	Sufficient	Sufficient	Poor	Poor
Groomsport	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent
<i>Donaghadee (candidate)</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	Poor

¹ DAERA [online] 'About bathing water quality' <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/bathing-water-quality>

Millisle	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Good
Ballywalter	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Good
Cloughey	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent

Source: DAERA [online] Bathing Water Profiles (found at <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/topics/bathing-water-quality>)

The results demonstrate that Ballyholme failed to meet the mandatory compliance of the Bathing Water Directive in 2022 and 2023. An investigation by DAERA¹ has indicated that the surrounding catchment of Ballyholme beach and Cotton River is a complex one, and is vulnerable to pressures from both agricultural run-off and overflows from the wastewater treatment network. The urbanisation associated with Ballyholme and Bangor is a potential source of pollution, especially during and after periods of prolonged or heavy rainfall. In the event of very heavy rainfall a collection system may not be able to deal with all the flow received. This is also indicated as a risk to bathing water quality at Ballywalter². Northern Ireland Water has an ongoing programme of upgrades to the wastewater treatment network in the area. Measures such as the incorporation of SuDS into new development can help to reduce pressure on drainage networks and can help to reduce urban pollution.

DAERA's 2022/23 Review of Bathing Waters recommended the addition of two new bathing waters in the Borough, at Brompton Bay, Bangor and at Donaghadee Harbour. The two candidate beaches are affected by the same pressures as Ballyholme and failed to meet bathing water standards in 2023.

Two new bathing waters were designated in 2018 at Kilclief and Ballyhornan beaches in Newry, Mourne and Down. Although outside the Borough, these beaches may be influenced by discharges from Ards and North Down.

Flood Risk

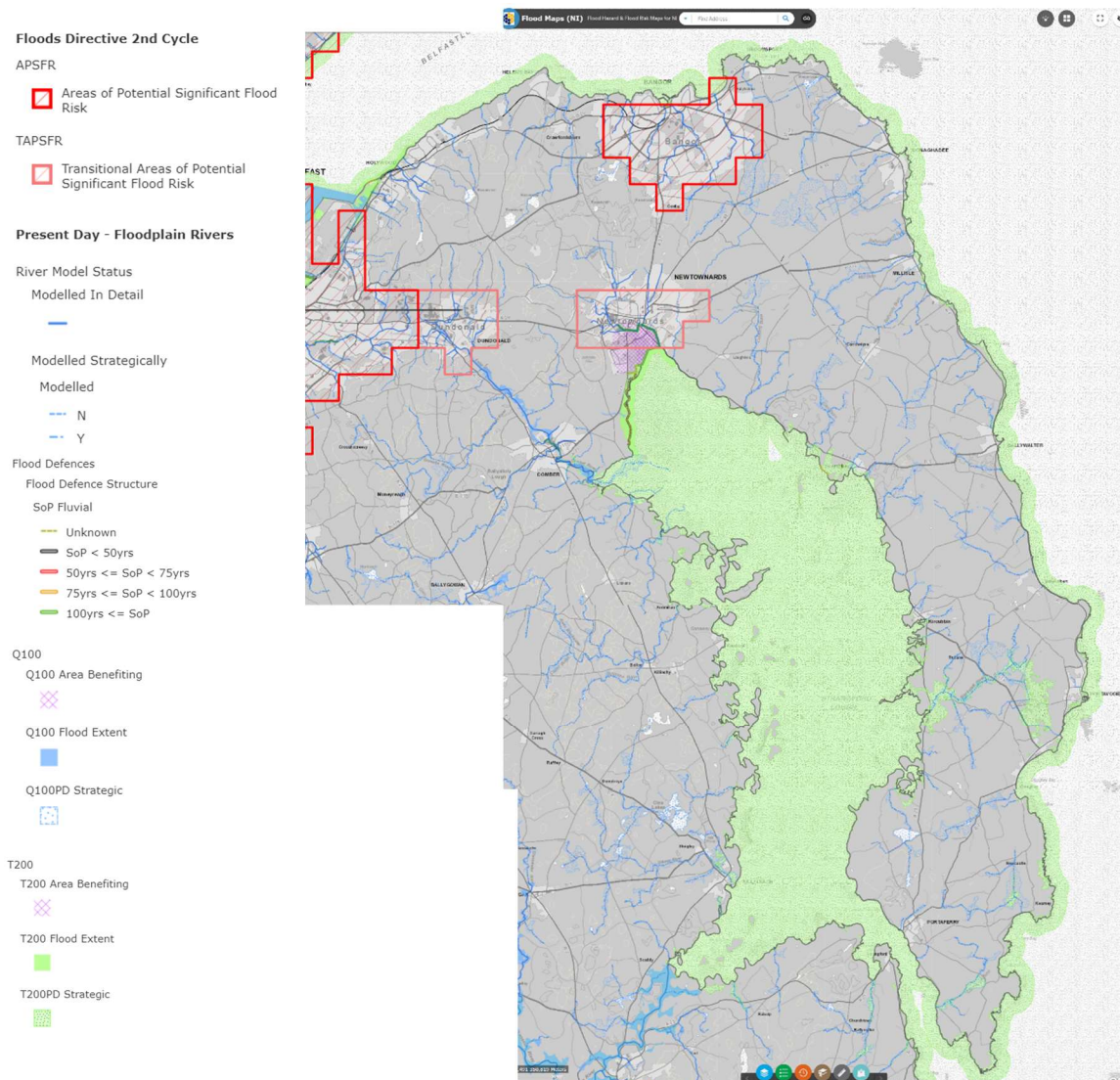
The implementation of the Water Environment (Floods Directive) Regulations has resulted in strategic flood risk assessment and mapping being carried out for all of NI and the publication of detailed Flood Hazard and Risk Maps³ for the areas determined to be at potential significant flood risk. These maps are continuously updated and are accessible from the DfI website.

¹ DAERA – Bathing water Profile – Ballyholme – May 2018

² DAERA – Bathing water Profile – Ballywalter – May 2018

³ Flood Maps (NI) is accessible through the DfI Mapping Portal <http://dfi-ni.maps.arcgis.com/home/index.html>

Figure 5.11.6: Areas of Potentially Significant Flood Risk, Present day Fluvial and Coastal Flood Plain



Source Department for Infrastructure (Rivers) Flood Maps NI

One settlement, Bangor, has been identified in the 2nd Cycle FRMP as an APSFR (Figure 5.11.6). Newtownards was previously identified as an APSFR in the first FRMP cycle, but is now classed as TAPSFR. The TAPSFR of Dundonald, in Belfast City Council, is also immediately adjacent to Ards and North Down. As it is upstream of the Borough, it is unlikely to be affected by development. Flood risk is further discussed in the Council's LDP Position Papers 'Flooding and Drainage' and 'The Coast'.

Ballygowan, Comber and Holywood were identified in the Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment (PFRA) for NI as having a moderate risk of flooding. While there may still be risk of flooding in these settlements, and others, the risk is no longer classed as 'significant' in the context of NI.

The FRMP aims to manage flood risk through:

- **Prevention:** avoiding construction of houses and industries in flood-prone areas; by adapting future developments to the risk of flooding; and by promoting appropriate land-use, agricultural and forestry practices.
- **Protection:** taking measures, both structural and non-structural, to reduce the likelihood and impact of floods.

- **Preparedness:** informing the public about flood risk and what to do in the event of a flood.

The multi-layered strategic Flood Hazard and Risk Maps provide information on flood defences, historical flood events and predicted extreme flood events for river and coastal flooding as well as the potential for surface water flooding. Additional information is available online at Flood Maps NI, which shows the areas potentially affected by fluvial or coastal flooding, taking account of the impacts of climate change.

The DfI has not undertaken any recent flood alleviation works in Ards and North Down. The 'Flooding and Drainage' Position Paper notes that Bangor is only considered to be at risk from fluvial flooding. Major improvements to the urban watercourses in Bangor were carried out by Rivers Agency in the 1990s. Subsequent to these works, few properties in the town appear to have been subject to inundation.

The Position Paper also comments that Newtownards is considered to be at significant risk from both tidal and fluvial flooding. A sea defence system helps to protect the town, however some of the watercourses are tidally influenced, which makes flood risk assessment more complex.

In addition to the above, tidal flood defences are also present in Comber and Holywood. In some coastal areas, landowners have privately constructed embankments to protect land from tidal flooding.

In the 2nd Cycle FRMP, DfI Rivers has indicated that it will "advise against bringing forward sites or the zoning of any land that has been identified from the flood maps as being within the 1 % AEP (1 in 100 year) fluvial floodplain, 0.5 % AEP (1 in 200 year) tidal floodplain/reservoir inundation area, or is susceptible to surface water flooding in preparation for the new Ards and North Down Local Development Plan".

The 2nd Cycle FRMP also indicates that the latest Climate Change projections from the UK Met Office, UKCP18, forecast a rise in sea level, increased winter precipitation and an increase in the frequency and intensity of extreme rainfall events, which will further increase flood risk in NI. In particular, UKCP18 predicts higher increases in Sea Level Rise than previous UKCP09 information, because potential polar ice sheet melting is now taken into account. NI sea levels are predicted to rise by between 33 – 94 cm by the year 2100; precipitation rates for winter are predicted to increase by the order of 20% to 40% in the same period.

The way that land is managed can also have an adverse effect on the likelihood of flooding. Increasing development and paving-over gardens and driveways (known as 'urban creep'). Any increase in land drainage or reclamation could change the ability of land to absorb rainfall. This will exacerbate local surface water flooding issues and cumulatively increase fluvial flood risk further downstream.

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)

Increasingly, reliance on traditional drainage systems is proving inadequate to address the issue of storm drainage. Alone, such systems may not cope with the demands made by new development, in addition to the more intense and increasingly unpredictable rainfall arising from climate change. The SPPS (para. 6.118) advocates SuDS as the preferred drainage solution for new development, noting that such systems '*have been shown to be more effective than traditional piped drainage in reducing surface water flooding as well as providing other environmental, economic and social benefits*'.

While planning policy encourages SuDS, it does not currently make it a requirement for new development. To date, 'soft' or 'above-ground' SuDS have rarely been used in NI¹, although SuDS principles are included in the design of new road schemes. In 2016, DfI changed the

¹ NI Assembly Research and Information Service Paper 31st May 2016 (found at <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/raise/publications/2016-2021/2016/infrastructure/3816.pdf>)

legislation regarding connection to the public sewer network, to provide a new power for NI Water to refuse a surface water connection if alternative means of dealing with surface water have not been considered. This has seen a substantial increase in the use of 'below-ground' SuDS to attenuate stormwater flows in new residential and business developments .

In January 2019 the Welsh Government made the inclusion of SuDS mandatory in new development. It has published information indicating that the capital costs of SuDS solutions on new developments are lower than the capital costs of comparable traditional piped drainage solutions. It also states that evidence shows that operational and maintenance costs also tend to be lower for SuDS¹.

The NIEA has indicated in its LDP consultation responses to Councils that in the design of SuDS, surface water should be dealt with as close as possible to where it falls as rain (source control). Two or more SuDS components can be used for the optimal solution to:

- Manage rainfall to mimic natural drainage by:
 - reducing runoff rates;
 - reducing additional runoff volumes and frequencies; and
 - encouraging natural groundwater recharge.
- Minimise impacts on quantity and quality of runoff by:
 - reducing pollution and protecting the quality of receiving waters;
 - preventing direct discharge of spillage; and
 - reducing the volume of surface waste runoff to sewers.
- Maximise amenity and biodiversity opportunity by:
 - contributing to the amenity and aesthetic value of the development; and
 - providing habitat for wildlife and biodiversity

Examples of localised source control measures include green roofs, permeable paving and soakaways, while larger passive treatment areas such as ponds and wetlands can be incorporated into wider green-blue infrastructure (see Section 5.8).

A flagship SuDS project within the Borough is the rainwater garden at Clandeboye Primary School². This is a simple system which collects runoff from the school buildings and playgrounds and directs it into storage tanks and ponds. The attenuation of rainfall helps reduce the risk of flooding from the Clandeboye Stream, whilst also enhancing the environment and providing a valuable educational resource.

Water Supply

The provision of water supply in Northern Ireland is the responsibility of NI Water. There are seven water supply zones wholly or partially within Ards and North Down:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| ■ ZS0108 Belfast Purdysburn | ■ ZS0408 Drumaroad Bangor East |
| ■ ZS0405 Drumaroad Ards West | ■ ZS0501 Drumaroad Lisburn |
| ■ ZS0406 Drumaroad Portaferry | ■ ZS0601 Drumaroad Ballynahinch |
| ■ ZS0407 Drumaroad Bangor West | |

Source : NI Water Annual Report on Water Quality (2022)

There are no WTW located within Ards and North Down. The Borough's drinking water is supplied from the following reservoirs:

- Drumaroad WTW near Castlewellan in neighbouring Newry, Mourne and Down District
- Dunore Point WTW in Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council Area
- Castor Bay WTW located in Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council Area

These WTWs are supplied with raw water from catchments in the Mourne mountains and Lough Neagh and supply water via 19 service reservoirs.

¹ Welsh Government Written Statement - Implementing sustainable drainage systems on new developments (found at <https://gov.wales/about/cabinet/cabinetstatements/2017/sustainable-drainage/?lang=en>) Last updated 16 November 2017

² NI Water Press Release "£70,000 Rainwater Garden Complete at Clandeboye Primary School!" published 12 January 2018

NI Water and its partners / stakeholders the RSPB and the NIEA have developed a SCaMP (Sustainable Catchment Management Planning) NI strategy to improve the quality and reliability of the water received at NI Water's raw water abstraction points. In addition to improving water quality, SCaMP also focuses on protecting and enhancing the natural environment. There are no current SCaMP projects in Ards and North Down, as the Borough has no drinking water catchments, however a number of pilot projects under way elsewhere may be rolled out in future to help improve local water quality more generally.

Reservoirs

Figure 5.11.7: Flood risk mapping of controlled reservoirs in Ards and North Down



³ Reservoir Flood Mapping for Emergency Planning on Dfi Mapping Portal <http://dfi-ni.maps.arcgis.com/home/index.html>

Wastewater Treatment

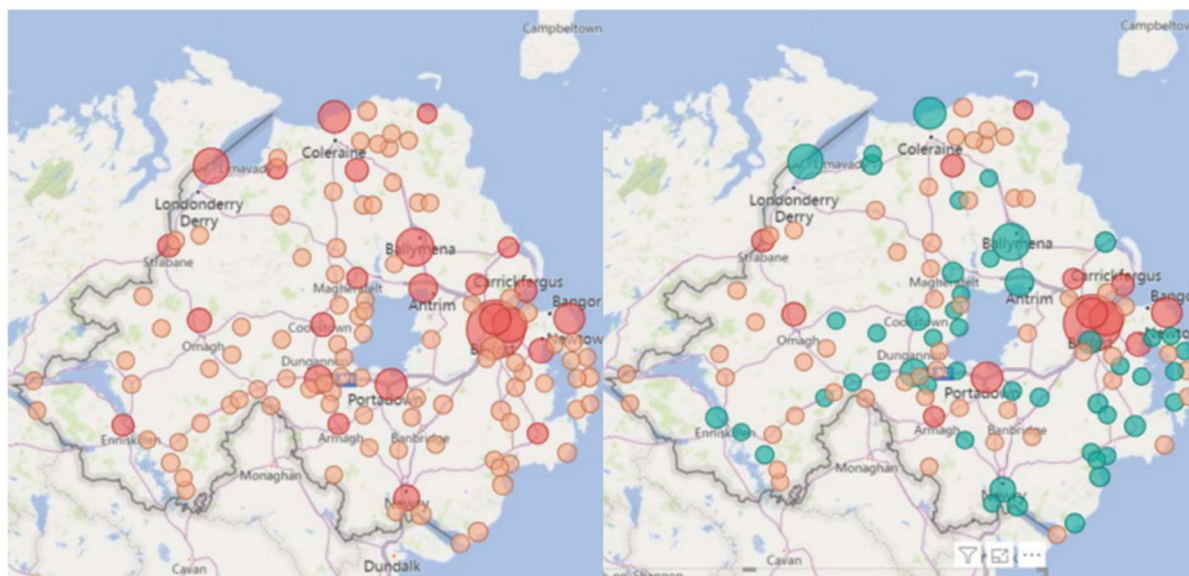
The provision of Wastewater Treatment Works (WwTWs) in the Plan area is also the responsibility of NIW. NIW provides the Council with regular updates on the capacity of WwTWs¹ serving the Borough as well as estimates of future capacity based on applying a settlement growth factor of 10%, 20% and 30%. It also provides information on network issues. As of August 2018 there are 24 settlements in the Borough served by 'large' WwTWs.

In 2020 NI Water published 'Our Strategy 2021-2046', which recognises the climate emergency as one of six strategic risks for the next 25 years. Most of the urban areas in Northern Ireland are served by combined sewers that carry both sewerage and surface water which is inefficient and results in pollution and floods. NI Water plans to gradually transform the sewerage network by taking every economically viable opportunity to disconnect surface areas from existing combined sewers, for example when laying a new storm sewer to service a new development. In many locations this will help free up capacity in combined sewers for new connections without having to lay new foul or combined sewers.

NI Water's PC21 Business Plan has identified a number of 'Economic Constrained Areas' (shown in Figure 5.11.8) where development is restricted due to severely compromised sewerage infrastructure and these areas are associated with several settlements in the Borough, including Bangor, Newtownards and Comber. NI Water expects to address these issues for the settlement highlighted in green (on the right hand map) during the investment period up to 2027. However, it warns that it may take several price control periods (each of which lasts six years) to fully rectify these development constraints.

Figure 5.11.8: NI Water constrained areas

Status ● Economic Constrained Area ● Serious Development Restriction ● PC21 investment



The Council will continue to work closely with NI Water in its LDP preparation, as the capacity of WwTWs and sewerage networks may have an influence on the distribution of proposed development in towns and villages.

5.11.3 Likely Evolution of the Baseline without the Local Development Plan

In the absence of a new plan there will be less certainty about the need for supply or treatment of water therefore infrastructure may not be developed in the most efficient manner. There is a risk that cumulative effects from development will counteract the goals of plans such as the River Basin Management Plan and UK Marine Strategy to achieve 'good'

¹ NIW Consultation response, August 2018

ecological or 'good' environmental status. While planning policies address issues such as flood risk, the opportunity to take a more strategic approach would be missed. There is a risk that taking decisions in the absence of an up to date plan could result in development that does not make the most sustainable use of infrastructure or which subsequently requires further measures to address knock on effects.

The plan will enable space for surface water management to be identified when zoning land. LDP policy could require, either generally or for specific zonings, that schemes are put in place at design stage so as to minimise surface water runoff.

5.11.4 Key Sustainability Issues for Water

- Development may lead to contaminated runoff which may increase pollution of fluvial and coastal waterbodies and the marine area.
- Other wastes may also cause surface or groundwater pollution at the point where they are used or disposed of, e.g. wastes from livestock production, food processing or primary treatment such as sewage or anaerobic digesters.
- River water quality in the Borough is significantly lower than the NI average and no surface water catchments or groundwater bodies have achieved 'good' ecological status. There is a need to improve the water quality of all river waterbodies to achieve 'good' status (or better).
- Water quality in Belfast Lough and Strangford Lough is not achieving 'good' status and not all shellfish areas are meeting the guideline standards for microbiological and other contaminants. There is a need to reduce pollutants and contaminants entering the marine area.
- Bathing water quality is good / excellent at four out of six of the Council's bathing beaches. Water quality in designated bathing waters should be sustained or improved.
- Plan proposals should be compatible with DfI's Flood Risk Management Plan. Bangor is identified as an area of Potentially Significant Flood Risk. Other settlements may have localised areas at risk of flooding.
- Development may lead to changes in the rate of surface water runoff, or the capacity of a receiving watercourse may be altered which in turn has the potential to increase flood risk.
- It is predicted that the risk and extent of flooding, particularly coastal flooding, will be increased by climate change.
- Development should be planned to avoid areas at significant risk from flooding, now or in the future, or where development may increase the flood risk elsewhere.
- Constructed flood alleviation and defence measures are expensive and can alter the natural morphology of riverbanks and coastlines. Where possible, they should be avoided.
- There are benefits in retaining and restoring natural flood plains and watercourses as a form of flood alleviation - this can support River Basin Management Plan objectives.
- Sustainable drainage (SuDS) measures could be incorporated and maintained in new development and redevelopment or regeneration schemes. 'Above ground' SuDS measures for source control can deliver wider ecosystem service benefits.
- Development in general requires a water supply, and can therefore increase demand for water sources, treatment and distribution infrastructure. This can be offset by measures to make more efficient use of water.
- Developments without access to mains sewers can incorporate sewage treatment on site. However, it is important that there is capacity for safe disposal of treated discharges

and for maintenance of the treatment system to ensure that it remains effective in the long term.

- NI Water has identified wastewater treatment works and wastewater network capacity constraints in several areas within the Borough. These may influence the potential for development in some settlements, or parts of settlements.

5.12 Natural Resources

5.12.1 Review of Policies, Plans, Programmes and Strategies

The natural resources topic provides information on designated sites, biodiversity, blue / green infrastructure, access, and ecosystem services.

There are several international measures which direct nature conservation legislation. The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (the 1971 Ramsar Convention) provides the framework for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources¹. Signatories committed to the Convention agree to use wetlands wisely, to designate and manage suitable wetlands, and to cooperate on transboundary wetlands and their species.

The Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (the Bern Convention), includes the objectives 'to ensure conservation and protection of wild plant and animal species and their natural habitats, to increase co-operation between contracting parties, and to regulate the exploitation of migratory species'².

The 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development also known as the 'Earth Summit' aimed to provide 'a new blueprint for international action on environmental and development issues'³. The Summit concluded that sustainable development could be achievable by all countries, but a new approach would be needed to ensure balance between economic, social and environmental concerns. One of the Summit's successful outcomes was The Convention on Biological Diversity (Rio 1992), which requires contracting parties to create and enforce national strategies and action plans to conserve, protect and enhance biological diversity⁴.

The UK is a signatory to all three Conventions and locally transposed legislation including the Wildlife (NI) Order 1985 and the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (NI) Order 1985⁵ helps it to deliver on its commitments. Through these laws, Councils have the power to establish Local Nature Reserves and Wildlife Refuges to protect and enhance local biodiversity.

The Borough Council also has a statutory duty to 'further the conservation of biodiversity', when exercising its functions under The Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (NI) 2011⁶. The WANE Act strengthened The Wildlife (NI) Order 1985 by enforcing a biodiversity duty on public bodies and adding species to Schedule 1, as well as providing specific protection for a new list of Schedule A1 bird species and generally improving enforcement powers.

The UK's new national network of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs), which replaced the European Union's network of sites 'Natura 2000' at the end of December 2020, seeks to conserve internationally important habitats for breeding, migrating and over wintering birds and to promote the maintenance of biodiversity. The Conservation (Natural Habitats etc) Regulations NI 1995 (as amended) transferred the European Commission's Habitats and Birds Directives into NI's domestic legislation.

The Habitats Directive 1992 'aims to promote the maintenance of biodiversity'⁷ and along with the Birds Directive 2009 (as amended) is an integral part of nature conservation policy in Europe. Both Directives were transposed into NI's legislation so even with the UK leaving the EU in 2021, designated European sites remain within the Borough Council's network of nature conservation sites. The Conservation Regulations also give effect to other site and species protection measures.

¹ Wetlands.org website: Wetlands/Ramsar Convention accessed May 2022

² JNCC website: Our Work/Bern Convention accessed May 2022

³ United Nations website: Conferences/Environment and sustainable development/Rio 1992 accessed May 2022

⁴ Convention on Biological Diversity website accessed May 2022

⁵ Legislation.gov.uk website/The Wildlife (NI) Order 1985 and Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (NI) Order 1985

⁶ Legislation.gov.uk website: Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (NI) 2011 accessed May 2022

⁷ European Commission website: Environment/Nature & Biodiversity/EU Nature Law accessed May 2022

The Marine and Coastal Access Act (MCAA) 2009 and the Marine Act (NI) 2013 require planning authorities to consider the UK Marine Policy Statement (MPS) and the NI Marine Plan when preparing their LDPs. Both Acts also require NI to produce its own Marine Plan. A draft Marine Plan for NI was consulted on in April 2018. The Marine Plan (when adopted) will be used by Public Authorities in taking decisions which affect or might affect the marine area, including authorisation or enforcement decisions and decisions that relate to the exercise of any function capable of affecting the marine area.

The draft Marine Plan includes among its core policies the requirement for public authorities to comply with the legal requirements for designated areas, and to consider any potential impact from proposals on other habitats, species or features of importance and protected species. It also provides policy on the consideration of cumulative impacts, invasive alien species, man-made noise on the marine area and impacts on coastal processes. It will align with and contribute to the policy objectives for key marine activities as set out in the UK MPS and will support and complement existing plans and policies.

At a regional level, a spatial approach for the protection of natural resource is provided through four policies in the Regional Development Strategy 2035¹. RG9 aims to, 'Reduce our carbon footprint and facilitate mitigation and adaptation to climate change whilst improving air quality.' This is seen as a priority for NI not just because of the human health implications but because of the predicted effects on species and habitats. RG11 aims to 'Conserve, protect and, where possible, enhance our built heritage and our natural environment.' with inland waterways, the coast, ecological networks and biodiversity all incorporated to the guidance. The RDS guidance can deliver benefits not just for the natural environment but for people's health and well-being, as well as the economy.

The PfG recognises that protecting the natural environment is one of the main issues people in NI are concerned about². The current PfG includes the commitment to protect and restore the natural environment.

Regional strategies and policy highlight the diversity of NI's natural environment. They provide protection of designated sites, priority species and habitats and other natural features as assets and directly link these to economic, social and environmental benefits. Planning Policy Statement 2: Natural Heritage sets out policy for protection of the natural environment from internationally important sites to local nature conservation sites, as well as areas with priority habitats and species. NI's Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) 2015 also applies, with the importance of NI's natural heritage for a sustainable economy, and 'to the overall health and well-being of our society' recognised³.

The natural heritage section of the SPPS provides strategic planning policy guidance for International designations (Ramsar sites, SACs, SPAs) and protected species, as well as national designations which includes Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs), nature reserves and Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs). The SPPS also guides on local designations and natural heritage features in non-designated areas because of the potential of all the natural environment in delivering ecosystem services which are 'an integral part of sustainable development.'

The Biodiversity Strategy for NI to 2020, '*Valuing Nature*' highlights the benefits of conserving diversity and acknowledges that biodiversity offsets due to compensate losses incurred during development can rarely replicate the complexity of natural systems. The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021-2025 encourages Councils 'to identify and protect existing areas that are already good for pollinators'. Ards and North Down Borough Council's Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) seeks to deliver on the objectives of these regional strategies at the local level.

¹ Department for Regional Development: Regional Development Strategy RDS 2035 Building a Better Future

² DAERA website/Consultation on the Programme for Government draft Outcomes Framework 2021 accessed May 2022

³ DoENI 2015: Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS) - Planning for Sustainable Development

One mechanism to help achieve future protection of our natural resources is the LDP. The Plan can help to protect the natural heritage resource of the Borough Council and promote ecological networks by integrating blue/green infrastructure - creating or enhancing parks, planting native trees/shrubs and incorporating waterways to help connect open and green space across urban and rural areas. These measures can deliver regional policy by helping to protect the natural environment and ecosystem services, as well as adapting to the effects of climate change.

A draft NI Peatland Strategy 2022-2040 was consulted on in 2021¹. It details the policy drivers for the strategy, the benefits of healthy peatlands – ecosystem services, and the factors adversely affecting peatlands with objectives and actions to restore and conserve peatlands as fully functioning natural assets. The strategy is an example of landscape-scale conservation that enables nature-based solutions to deliver biodiversity conservation as well as climate resilience².

In 2021, the Executive also brought forward a draft Green Growth Strategy – Balancing our climate, environment and economy³. All new policies and strategies will be expected to align with the strategy, to help NI move toward a low-carbon and greener future. The strategy aims to deliver this by reducing GHG emissions to zero by 2050 and by stimulating green recovery jobs, with sectoral Climate Action Plans, and Green Growth tests for all new plans and laws. The Strategy's vision for 2050 states, 'As a result of all our efforts, we have a more resilient environment with a healthy ecosystem and a strong sustainable economy. More people are employed in green jobs and all generations benefit from improved wellbeing.'

'DAERA's Plan to 2050 - Sustainability for the Future' was also approved in 2021⁴. It has a vision where long-term planning for our natural wealth supports rural communities by stimulating and supporting the food, farming, fishing and forestry industries. The plan has four strategic priorities, which encompass economic growth, the natural environment, rural communities and exemplar organisation. The plan is clear in that 'A healthy and resilient natural world underpins economic prosperity'.

The Council's Corporate Plan 2024-2028 has the vision of 'A Sustainable Borough' and includes "An environmentally resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets" among its strategic outcomes.

Aiming for net zero carbon targets will also help the Council meet future legislative requirements of the Climate Change Act (NI) 2022, whilst helping businesses and residents to become more resilient for the predicted impacts of climate change. Protecting and enhancing green and blue spaces is also a key aspect of achieving environmental sustainability.

The Borough's Community Plan, *The Big Plan*, has a vision for the area to be '*a vibrant, connected, healthy, safe and prosperous place*'. There are five outcomes to help achieve this vision and two are particularly relevant to the conservation and sustainable management of the natural environment. Outcome 2 aims for people to have good health and wellbeing, while outcome 5 aims for people to be able to access a well-managed sustainable environment. Some of the aspirations aim for people to be able to access the benefits of the natural environment and for protection of the quality of the natural environment. Consideration of the natural environment within the LDP process will be fundamental to achieving these outcomes.

5.12.2 Baseline Information

Relevant information is presented in the LDP Position Papers on the Natural Environment, the Coast, Landscape Character, Environmental Resilience and Transportation. This topic

¹ DAERA website/NI Peatland Strategy accessed May 2022

² IUCN Peatland Programme website/NI Peatland Strategy Consultation accessed May 2022

³ DAERA website/A Green Growth Strategy for NI accessed May 2022

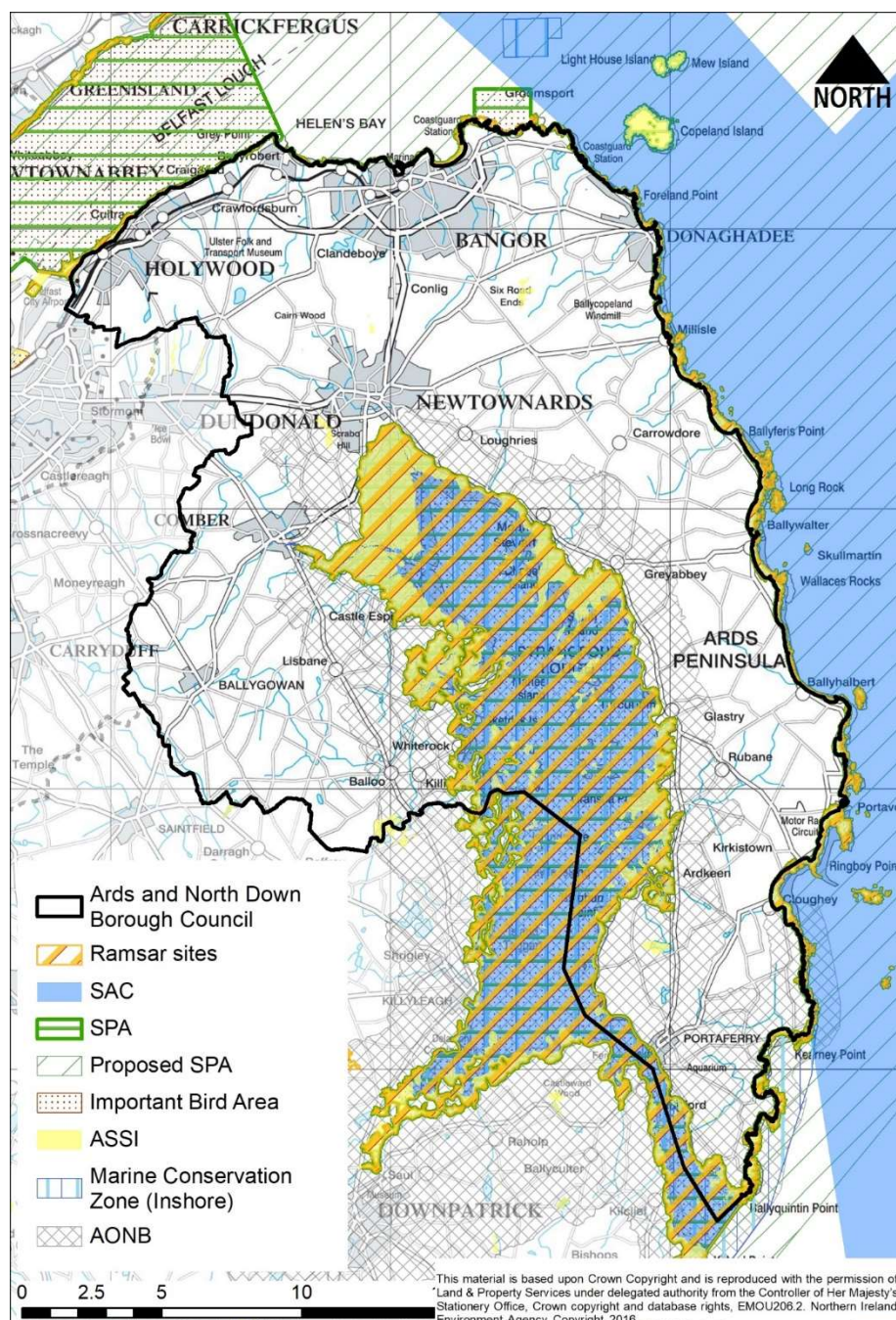
⁴ DAERA website/ Sustainability for the Future accessed May 2022

overlaps with the Health and Well-being, Material Assets, Physical Resources, Transport and Accessibility, Air Quality, Climate Change, Water, Landscape, and Historic Environment and Cultural Heritage sections of this report.

Nature Conservation Sites (International/European)

Ards and North Down Borough covers approx. 228 sq. miles and has an extensive coastline of approximately 115 miles. The variety of habitats present include wetlands, grasslands, heathlands, coastal and marine. This natural diversity is protected using International, European, regional and local level nature conservation and landscape designations. These designations help to protect the most important areas for nature conservation and help to maintain green and blue infrastructure across the Borough. At the same time, they can also provide for amenity interests.

Figure 5.12.1: Nature Conservation Designations of International, National and Regional Importance



Source: DAERA Digital Datasets (published March 2019)

A number of sites within or adjoining the Borough have been designated for their International or European conservation importance. These include three Ramsar sites, five Special Protection Areas (SPAs) (plus one proposed SPA), three Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). Three areas are also identified by Birdlife International as 'Important Bird Areas'; these are considered globally important for bird conservation and biodiversity.

At the national and regional level, Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs) are nationally important areas that represent the best of our wildlife and geological sites. There are sixteen ASSIs designated in the Borough.

The Strangford and Lecale AONB encompasses Strangford Lough and an extensive area of surrounding land and coastline. The AONB designation covers over 40% of the Borough and is shared with Newry, Mourne and Down District Council.

Nature reserves represent 'core areas' of high biodiversity value – reservoirs for native wildlife managed primarily for nature conservation. There are two National Nature Reserves and two Nature Reserves within the Borough, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) also manages reserves within neighbouring Council boundaries at Belfast Lough and Strangford Lough.

Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCI) are non-statutory designations which were originally identified by NIEA for their local biodiversity value and contribution to local natural heritage and biodiversity. The extant area plans include 47 SLNCI across the Borough, with the majority located in and around the north of the Council area between Hollywood, Bangor and Newtownards. Sites identified to the west of Strangford Lough include Ballymacashen Bog and Ballalloly Lough and a small number are located on the Ards Peninsula. Most of the SLNCIs are also identified on NIEA's Natural Environment Mapviewer as Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) but, such as Lough Cowey, do not have the LWS status.

The Borough has three Ulster Wildlife reserves. Two are on the outskirts of Bangor whilst Inishargy Bog is on the Ards Peninsula. This is also a LWS and a SLNCI.

The National Trust manages a significant amount of land in the north of Strangford Lough and sections on the east and coastal south of the lough. National Trust also manages parts of the coast at the southern tip of Strangford Lough in around Ballyquintan and Kearney Points but also along the north coastline at Ballymacormick and Orlock Points.

The Borough also benefits from several Country Parks – Killynether, Crawfordsburn, Redburn and Whitespots. These are important for local biodiversity as well as amenity value.

Ancient woodland is a unique habitat with a rich biodiversity formed over hundreds of years. It covers only 2% of land in the UK¹. Ancient woodland habitat is present within the Borough and is particularly evident between Holywood and Bangor, around Mount Stewart and Greyabbey, north of Portaferry. There are a few small patches along the Ards Peninsula. A few Forest Service sites are also located in and around the Holywood and Mount Stewart areas with tracts of native and semi natural woodland present. These are mostly evident in similar locations to the larger areas of ancient woodland at Ballysallagh, Clandeboye and Mount Stewart. Although widely dispersed, these habitats help to maintain local biodiversity levels. Local-level nature conservation sites including nature reserves and ancient woodland sites are shown in Figure 5.12.2.

¹ <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/about-us/ancient-woodland-restoration/ancient-woodland/what-is-ancient-woodland/>

Legend

- National Trust
- Ulster Wildlife
- RSPB Reserve
- Local Wildlife Site
- National Nature Reserve/Nature Reserve
- Site of Local Nature Conservation Interest
- Ancient Woodland (Forest Service)
- Ancient Woodland (Woodland Trust)
- Semi Natural/Native Woodland (Forest Service)
- Local Government District Boundary
- Ards & North Down Borough Council

0 1 2 4 6 8 10 Kilometers

The coastline is of particular importance to the Borough as a significant natural heritage asset that supports species and habitats, whilst also providing amenity, recreational and educational value to residents and visitors. It contributes to the Borough's natural capital by enabling adaptation to coastal flooding, sea level rise, and coastal erosion. More information is in the Climate Change section of this report.

Strangford Lough has nine designations protecting its natural heritage and is NI's first Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ). Ards and North Down Borough Council must consider the marine area due to the Borough's coastal location. Four separate marine designations adjoin its boundary. These include the East Coast (NI) Marine proposed SPA, the North Channel Special Area of Conservation, and two MCZs – Strangford Lough and Outer Belfast Lough. These are shown in Figure 5.12.1.

Biodiversity

The Council has a Biodiversity Officer and a draft Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) 2022-2032 to help guide local level biodiversity conservation for key habitats and species¹. All Councils in NI have a duty to help conserve biodiversity within their functions under The Wildlife and Natural Environment (NI) Act (2011). LBAPs are an appropriate measure to help achieve this and to halt the loss of biodiversity.

The LBAP is very much community based. Its practical delivery is reliant upon the creation of local partnerships, with local people, the local community, and conservation organisations at its core. There is a section within the LBAP informing what one person can do to help, or what a farmer can do to help, and likewise what a community or business can do.

The overall aims of the LBAP are to conserve habitats and species, raise awareness of the ecosystem services provided in the Council area, and to involve people in the delivery of its biodiversity conservation projects.

Currently the LBAP has 77 actions to deliver conservation across the Borough under 4 themes:

- Education and Awareness
- Research and Monitoring
- Land Management
- Building Partnerships

Not surprisingly, coastal and marine habitats make up an integral part of the LBAP. The uniqueness of the Borough Council and its connection to the marine environment is evident through the marine designations afforded to Strangford Lough and its many islands, the Outer Ards coastline, Belfast Lough, and the Copeland Islands located just off the coast at Donaghadee. There is subsequently a wide variety of birds associated with coastal areas found within the area, as well as sea mammals, and coastal plant life.

The LBAP informs as to when and where certain plants and animals can best be seen, with suggested locations to visit.

Other habitats referred to in the LBAP include farmland, woodland, peatland, lowland raised bog, wetlands, and urban sites. All the habitats have main threats to their conservation listed, with habitat loss due to development or some type of inappropriate land use or management, referenced.

Local species have also been selected for action in the LBAP. These are based on NI's priority species i.e. those most in need of conservation action. The LBAP has identified species within the Council area that are of specific importance in a Northern Ireland context, and those of a local value.

The Council 'is conscious that they can make a significant impact to the quality and quantity of habitats and species through its management and project practices and recognise that

¹ Ards and North Down Borough Council website accessed March 2024

further improvements can be gained through formally including biodiversity within its project and maintenance programs. This is particularly important where Council holdings infringe upon designated conservation areas.’

Some of the species listed include bats, Irish hare, Harbour porpoise, Common seal, Red squirrel, pine marten, and European hedgehog. A variety of birds are also listed which are associated with marine and coastal habitats, as well as wetlands, and arable farmland. The biodiversity importance of the Borough is clearly highlighted through the sheer number of birds of conservation concern¹ that are evident within the Council area. Several of these are key species for conservation projects led by environmental charities such as the RSPB.

The LBAP also refers to ‘Pollinators’ which helps to highlight the importance of moths, bees, hoverflies and butterflies, in addition to bumblebees, within the natural environment. The link between these insects and our food supply is made, with reference to a new All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021 – 2025. This plan recognises the important role that Councils can fulfil, leading by example at the local level to provide habitat for pollinators.

The LBAP goes on to refer to reptiles, amphibians, fish, flora, lower plants, and sea grass. Sea grass is of particular importance to Light-bellied Brent geese, which migrate from Canada during the winter months to key sites which include Strangford Lough². Without this key food resource, conservation of the species would be affected at a global level. This is a good example of how local level action through biodiversity conservation can support biodiversity at a global scale.

The Council acknowledges its land resource in terms of biodiversity by categorising ‘space’ as either green, grey or brown. The LBAP goes on to describe each with reference to their potential multifunctional value i.e. green space for biodiversity but also flood protection and amenity, grey space for its function but also opportunities for biodiversity, and brown space as a land resource for redevelopment, and with that, opportunities for biodiversity both during the interim period and in the future.

More information on partnership working for nature conservation and other benefits follows in the Ecosystem Services section.

Green and blue Infrastructure

In the SPPS, Local Development Plans are referred to as a means to plan for and integrate the natural environment into neighbourhoods. It encourages biodiversity to be considered as a feature of plans and designs³. All green and blue features can be classified as green and blue infrastructure which can connect natural habitats and open space together across landscapes/seascapes. Green and blue infrastructure can be ponds, gardens, allotments, rivers and even parks and Sustainable Drainage Systems. When protected and planned for, it can help maintain and enhance local biodiversity by conserving, creating or adding to wildlife corridors. The SPPS recognises this and the value it can bring to people’s health and quality of life. Likewise, its consideration can help to strengthen natural infrastructure that may act as a floodplain or coastal defence, a carbon or water store, or help reduce the effects of the urban heat island. Green and blue infrastructure is often multifunctional land with possibilities for incorporation of active travel routes. The Comber Greenway⁴, which is partially located within the Borough, is an excellent example of this. More information on walking and cycling routes and greenways is in the Transport and Accessibility section of this report, whilst coastal flooding is referred to in the Climate Change section.

Canoe NI

Canoe NI is part of Outdoor Recreation NI and helps to ensure access to NI’s canoe trails is safe and feasible. Although there is an absence of canals in the Ards and North Down

¹ Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland 2020-2026

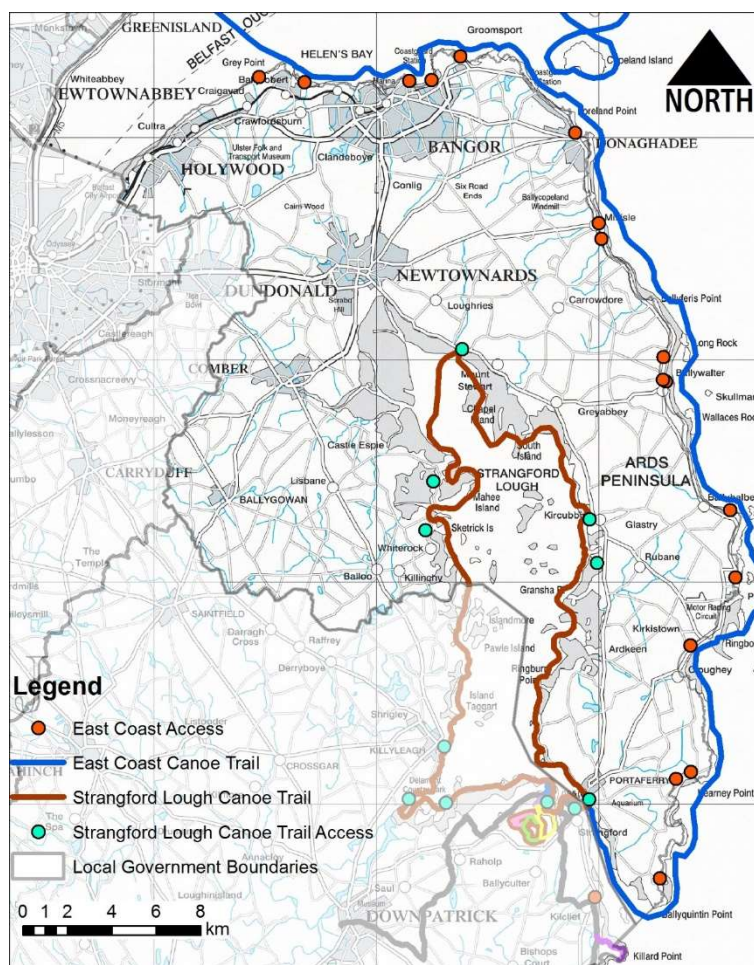
² www.irishbrentgoose.com

³ DoE (September 2015): Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS) Planning for Sustainable Development

⁴ <https://www.walkni.com/walks/comber-greenway/>

Borough, there are a significant amount of canoe trails and access points available. These are located around the full length of Strangford Lough and along the entire coastline of the Ards Peninsula. Both trails are shown in Figure 5.12.3.

Figure 5.12.3: Accessible Canoe Trails from Ards and North Down Borough



Source: Canoe NI

Ecosystem Services

In recent years, the natural environment has become increasingly recognised for the range of beneficial services that it provides to economic performance, health and well-being, and people's quality of life. The provision of these benefits can be referred to as 'ecosystem services'. The SPPS recommends the appropriate integration of ecosystem services into the LDP process, highlighting the importance of ecosystem services in spatial planning¹.

Ecosystem services can be grouped into four main categories – provisioning, regulating, cultural and supporting². Provisioning refers to providing food and materials; regulating refers to physical processes such as pollination and climate; cultural refers to meeting peoples' recreational, spiritual or aesthetic needs; and supporting refers to processes such as the water cycle and soil formation.

There are several ecosystem services projects across Northern Ireland. These focus on more sustainable approaches to managing land with positive benefits for stakeholders like reduced costs. Northern Ireland Water is involved in several ecosystem services projects with economic benefits that have also delivered environmental gains including restored

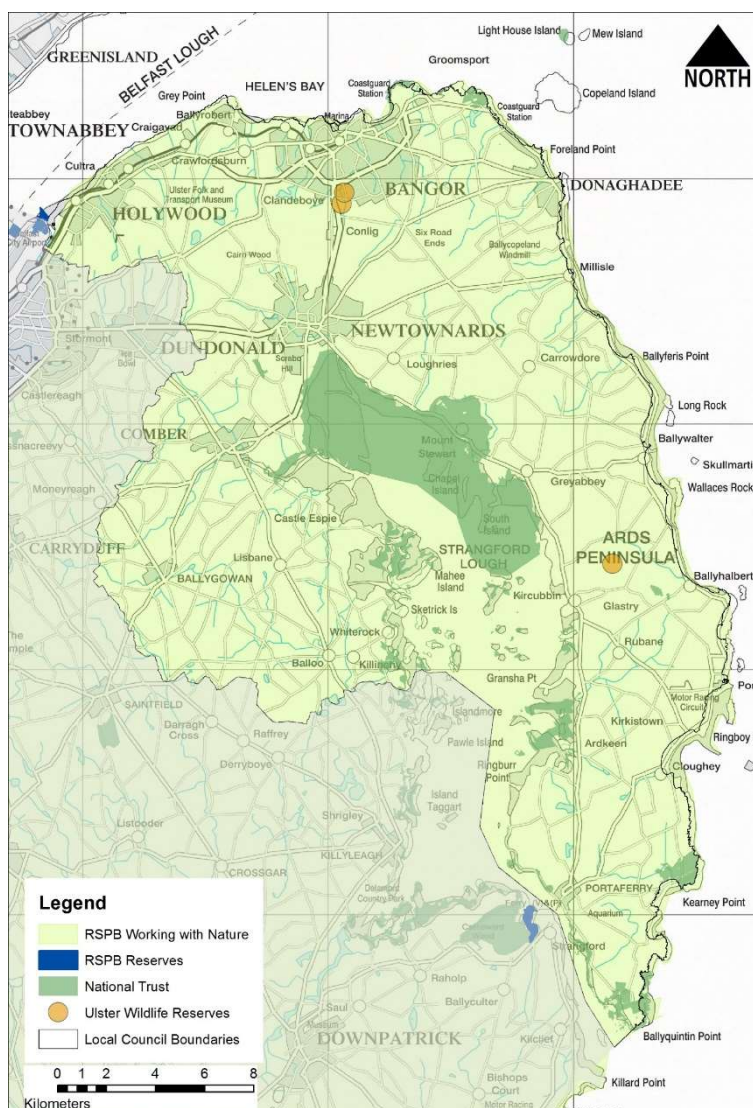
¹ Ards and North Down Borough Council's Local Development Plan – POP Position Paper Environmental Resilience

² Ards and North Down Borough Council's Local Development Plan – POP Position Paper Environmental Resilience

upland bog¹ and wildflower meadows². Ecosystem services projects can often help to combat climate change, increase local biodiversity and provide an amenity area/value for local people.

Currently the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds is working with over 70 farmers on a project called 'Working together with Nature'³. The project encompasses a significant amount of land including the entire Ards and North Down Borough. It is an example of farmers integrating new measures to support seed eating birds that helps to maintain and enhance local biodiversity.

Figure 5.12.4: Working together with Nature project area and NGO Reserves in Ards and North BC



Source: RSPB NI, Ulster Wildlife, National Trust

Forest Service owned lands like Clondeboye, Mount Stewart and Ballysallagh can also be counted as ecosystem services that provide multiple benefits to users and the physical environment. Appropriately managed Forest Service lands can provide sources of timber, locations for recreational and leisure facilities, habitat for priority species, and act as carbon and water stores. Ecosystem services have been incorporated to regional level landscape assessments, including for the Ards Peninsula. The uniqueness of the area is recognised as

¹ https://www.climate-northernireland.org.uk/cmsfiles/ClimateNI_RSPBFINAL.pdf

² <https://www.ulsterwildlife.org/news/2016/08/25/former-sewage-lagoons-be-transformed-wildlife-haven>

³ RSPB NI Conservation Team 2018

providing and enabling multiple economic, social and environmental benefits by supporting local industry and business, as well as amenity value. Further information is in the Landscape section of this report.

5.12.3 Likely Evolution of the Baseline without a Local Development Plan

In the absence of a new plan, there could be a risk of inappropriate development with negative impacts on the natural heritage resource including loss of priority habitat. It could become increasingly difficult to manage pollution risk, particularly in areas under development pressure. It could also become increasingly difficult to mitigate the impacts of climate change on habitats and species, particularly in coastal areas. Without up to date information, spatially managing development to avoid impacts on local biodiversity and green and blue infrastructure would be less feasible. With a new LDP in place, up to date information on the natural heritage resource would be available and protection and enhancement of it as a key asset would be more feasible. There could also be an opportunity to highlight ecosystem services opportunities.

5.12.4 Key Sustainability Issues for Natural Resources

- The Borough has 115 miles of coastline, which receives protection due to its environmental importance and multiple benefits for the environment, the economy, and peoples' health and well-being.
- Most of the Borough's settlements are located along the Borough's coast.
- Strangford Lough is a valuable and unique natural resource within the Borough's jurisdiction. It is protected by several designations to ensure its integrity is conserved, protected and enhanced.
- The Borough has a hierarchy of designated sites to protect its natural heritage resource. These designations range from International and European through to National level and include marine designations in the adjacent marine area. Local level sites are also identified in extant Area plans.
- There may be potential for new local level nature conservation sites in the south of the Borough and along the Ards Peninsula, as well as opportunities to add to the total number or quality of local level sites across the area.
- Ancient woodland sites, native/semi-natural woodlands, and woodland cover are of particular importance in the Borough because of their conservation value.
- A new Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) and a Biodiversity Officer are available within the Borough Council area. These resources will help guide local level biodiversity conservation projects and enable partnership working across communities.
- The Council can play an important role in biodiversity by leading by example and providing local level spaces for projects.
- There is a statutory requirement of the Council to further the conservation of biodiversity in its functions.
- Development pressure and inappropriate land use must be managed near all designated sites but also any priority habitat. This is particularly important in and around Strangford Lough and the rest of the coastline, as it is a valuable natural resource providing ecosystem services.
- There is a need for the Council to define the 'coastal zone' to help enable management of it.
- There is potential for additional green and blue infrastructure across the Borough, with opportunities for multifunctional benefits i.e. local biodiversity gain, active travel route

provision, access to amenity value, and strengthened natural capital able to reduce flood risk.

- The coastline and areas of the Borough are already recognised for their ecosystem services value – fisheries, crops, culture, tourism, health and amenity. New opportunities for projects could help raise awareness of the physical and economic importance of the natural environment.
- The Borough has an important amount of access to canoe trails in and around Strangford Lough and the Outer Ards coastline.
- Unregulated activities that affect Strangford Lough may need to be appropriately addressed under provisions in the Marine Act (NI) 2013.
- The inter-relationship between onshore and offshore activities needs to be appropriately considered.
- Marine planning and its associated obligations need to be appropriately considered within the Local Development Plan, particularly as previous plans and frameworks may not have referred to coastal or marine matters.
- There is a need to identify stakeholders to engage with on shared coastal and designated site issues, and any other potential projects that are likely to require a holistic approach. Examples of stakeholders include Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, Belfast City Council, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council, and the National Trust.
- The National Trust has identified coastal change hotspots at Mount Stewart and Kearney.
- More sustainable defence and protection measures need to be considered as alternative approaches to coastal realignment, rather than the traditional practice of hard sea defences.
- Futureproof the Council by advocating a precautionary approach to coastal development and coastal defence by researching erosion and flooding issues to improve coastal knowledge and lead zoning areas of constraint.

5.13 Landscape

5.13.1 Review of Policies, Plans, Programmes and Strategies

A key aim in NI's Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035 for protection and enhancement of the environment quotes 'stunning landscapes' and 'outstanding coastline' as contributing to one of NI's greatest assets – the environment. The RDS encourages protection of the natural environment, under regional guidance (RG11) - 'Conserve, protect and, where possible, enhance our built heritage assets and our natural environment'.

Landscape with views of the coast or seas, and coasts and the adjacent marine environment may also be described as 'seascape'. There are several landscape (including seascape) related points under the RDS natural environment guidance, including to 'protect, enhance and manage coastal areas', 'recognise and promote the conservation of local identity and distinctive landscape character', 'conserve, protect and where possible enhance areas recognised for their landscape quality', and to 'protect designated areas of countryside from inappropriate development (either directly or indirectly) and continue to assess areas for designation'. The important connection between landscape character and an area's uniqueness is highlighted in that 'we can only make informed and responsible decisions on the management and planning of sustainable future landscapes if we pay proper regard to their existing character.' Strangford Lough and Coast is identified in the RDS as a 'Strategic Natural Resource'.

The Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) recognises the importance of the countryside as one of the region's 'greatest assets, with its highly valued landscapes.' It aims to avoid inappropriate development and provide a high standard of landscape protection that also reflects regional and local differences. Protection of landscape as a consideration is evident within several subject policies including development in the countryside, minerals, open space, sport and outdoor recreation, renewable energy, telecommunications and other utilities. The SPPS promotes sustainable development as deliverable by planning authorities who must recognise 'all three pillars of sustainable development in formulating policies and plans'. The SPPS also recognises the importance of the coastline and seascape character in terms of our environment and highlights throughout the multiple benefits from delivering good landscape design – biodiversity gain, amenity value, place-making, flood resilience, preservation of historic/cultural assets, inclusion of active travel routes, etc.

This is in keeping with the aims of the European Landscape Convention, also known as the 'Florence Convention', which encourages countries to consider protection of everyday landscapes. It aims to protect, manage and plan landscapes, including every day or degraded settings and to help reconnect people with place¹. Although landscape designations already exist, the new Plan can also facilitate new policy areas such as Special Countryside Areas (SCAs) and Areas of High Scenic Value (AoHSV) to further conserve exceptional landscapes and unique amenity value².

'Much of what is valued in a landscape is a blend of natural features and social and cultural history,' which together can create a unique sense of place to people through art, literature, music and a sense of belonging³. Landscape is increasingly being realised in economic terms. The SPPS refers to the coast as 'of great economic importance to NI.' where the natural character and landscape must be protected from inappropriate development and appropriate development facilitated. The quality of the region's environment is stated as playing a 'critical role in supporting the local economy', which is in part due to its 'distinctive and beautiful landscape.'

¹ Landscape Institute [online] The European Landscape Convention (ELC) (found at <https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/policy/13732-2> [accessed 20/04/2020])

² Department of the Environment (2015): Strategic Planning Policy Statement for NI-Planning for Sustainable Development September 2015

³ DAERA website/Landscapes: Land and Landscapes: Legislation accessed June 2022

Existing landscape designations already help to do this with the most valuable landscapes in NI designated as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) for their 'high landscape quality, wildlife importance, and rich cultural and architectural heritage under the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (NI) Order 1985¹. There is one AONB located in the Borough, and with its own Management Action Plan - the Strangford Lough and Lecale AONB. This aims to deliver positive outcomes for citizens and visitors.

The North Down coastline was designated within the BMAP but due to its ruling, the statutory development plan for the Borough remains the North Down and Ards Area Plan 1984-1995 (NDAAP). The NDAAP is now well out of date and a new LDP could provide opportunities for policy areas such as AoHSV, to help conserve unique landscapes. These could add to existing designations including the Strangford and Lecale AONB and its associated Action Plan that aims to manage the site sustainably. The ADAP 2015 also recognises the importance of coastal areas in terms of landscape.

Key priority areas of the PfG include protection and restoration of the natural environment, the green economy, and planning (for sustainable and positive places). All are likely to encompass measures for landscape protection. Fundamental to the attractiveness of NI will be the preservation of its landscape and environment.

The draft Marine Plan includes among its core policies the requirement for public authorities to consider the potential impact from proposals on seascape, taking account of the existing character and quality of an area, how highly it is valued, and its capacity to accommodate change. The Marine Plan will provide spatial guidance and detailed policy for the coast and marine area and help to conserve the landscape setting of features².

The Borough Council has an Integrated Strategy 2018 – 2030 for Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development. It is a reference point for all those contributing to economic growth, as well as welcoming visitors and improving places. 'The natural landscape of sea, loughs and land – a blue green space', is quoted as the Borough's top strength. With regards to this topic, the language used speaks for itself. The inter-relatedness of natural assets like landscape, and future investment by businesses and industries is made clear, as too is the desire of visitors and people to be somewhere prosperous but also aesthetically pleasing.

The Council's Corporate Plan 2024-2028 has the vision of 'A Sustainable Borough' and includes "a vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors" among its strategic outcomes.

The Council's Community Plan, 'The Big Plan', sets out a holistic approach to achieving its vision and outcomes. The Plan recognises the 'rich diversity of scenic countryside' that makes the setting of the Borough. It acknowledges the importance of Strangford Lough as a landscape feature of 'global environmental importance'. Aspiring to protect the natural environment, while connecting people to it for its health and economic benefits, is part of achieving the outcomes of the Community Plan. Fundamental to this will be appropriate consideration of landscape within the development of the LDP.

5.13.2 Baseline Information

Detailed information on landscape has been provided in the Local Development Plan Position Papers on Landscape Character Assessment; The Coast; and Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation. This topic also overlaps with the Health & Well-being, Economy & Employment, Material Assets, Physical Resources, Natural Resources, Climate Change, and Historic Environment and Cultural heritage sections of this report.

¹ Department of the Environment (2015): Strategic Planning Policy Statement for NI-Planning for Sustainable Development September 2015

² Department for Regional Development: Regional Development Strategy RDS 2035 Building a Better Future

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

AONBs are designated for their landscape value but also '*wildlife importance and rich cultural and architectural heritage*'¹. The Ards and North Down Borough has a variety of landscape types including extensive coastlines, drumlin lowlands, and arable farmland. Its central area is dominated by Strangford Lough – an AONB since the 1960s. This was re-designated as the Strangford and Lecale AONB in 2010, under the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (NI) Order (1985). Its extents are shown in Figure 5.13.1.

The AONB is a marine lough, mostly located within the Council area but it also crosses into the Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's jurisdiction. The designation protects the entire lough and its shores where a diversity of low-lying wetland habitats, farmland and drumlin hills are located. It is an internationally important wetland site for migrating, wintering and breeding birds, as well as being nationally and regionally important for a variety of birds, habitats and species. More information on its nature conservation value and designations including that of a Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) is in the Natural Resources section of this report.

The Strangford & Lecale AONB Management Plan serves as a collaborative framework for all stakeholders involved. Aligned with the NIEA's policy 'Protected Landscapes – Shared Horizons,' the objective is to preserve the landscape character and natural, built, and cultural heritage of the Strangford & Lecale AONB. The Plan is renewed every five years².

Landscape Character Areas

The Northern Ireland Landscape Character Assessment 2000 subdivided the countryside into 130 Landscape Character Areas (LCAs), each based upon local patterns of geology, landform, land use, cultural and ecological features. There are 130 LCAs across Northern Ireland. They can provide, 'an understanding of how the landscape functions to support communities, cultural heritage and development, local and macro economies, as well as the wildlife and natural resources of the area'³.

Ten LCAs are located either wholly or partially within the Borough and are shown on Figure 5.13.1. They range in character from the exposed rocky shorelines and uninhibited sea views of the Ballyquintan and Lecale Coast; to the Holywood Hills with its 200-metre hills, steep wooded slopes and historic estates; to the Strangford Drumlins and Islands with its stone bridges and causeways, winding roads, castles and mottes. Each LCA has a report, which identifies pressures on landscape and guidelines for their sustainable management. In spite of the information provided by LCAs and their potential use in decision-making, they are accepted as being dated⁴. Since 2000, the type of likely development pressure to be considered on landscape/seascape has evolved and more information is presented below under '*Development Pressure*'.

The LCAs provide important information to guide landscape management and any new development in those areas. It is evident from these principles that in some LCAs there is a risk of further development leading to a loss of rural character through merging settlements, or a risk that some built development may be inappropriately located on high ridges. Likewise, appropriate styles and designs using traditional colours, native planting, and ideally, conversion of traditional buildings, are recommended to help maintain local character and integrate new development⁵.

¹ Ards & North Down Borough Council's Local Development Plan POP Position Paper – Landscape Character Assessment

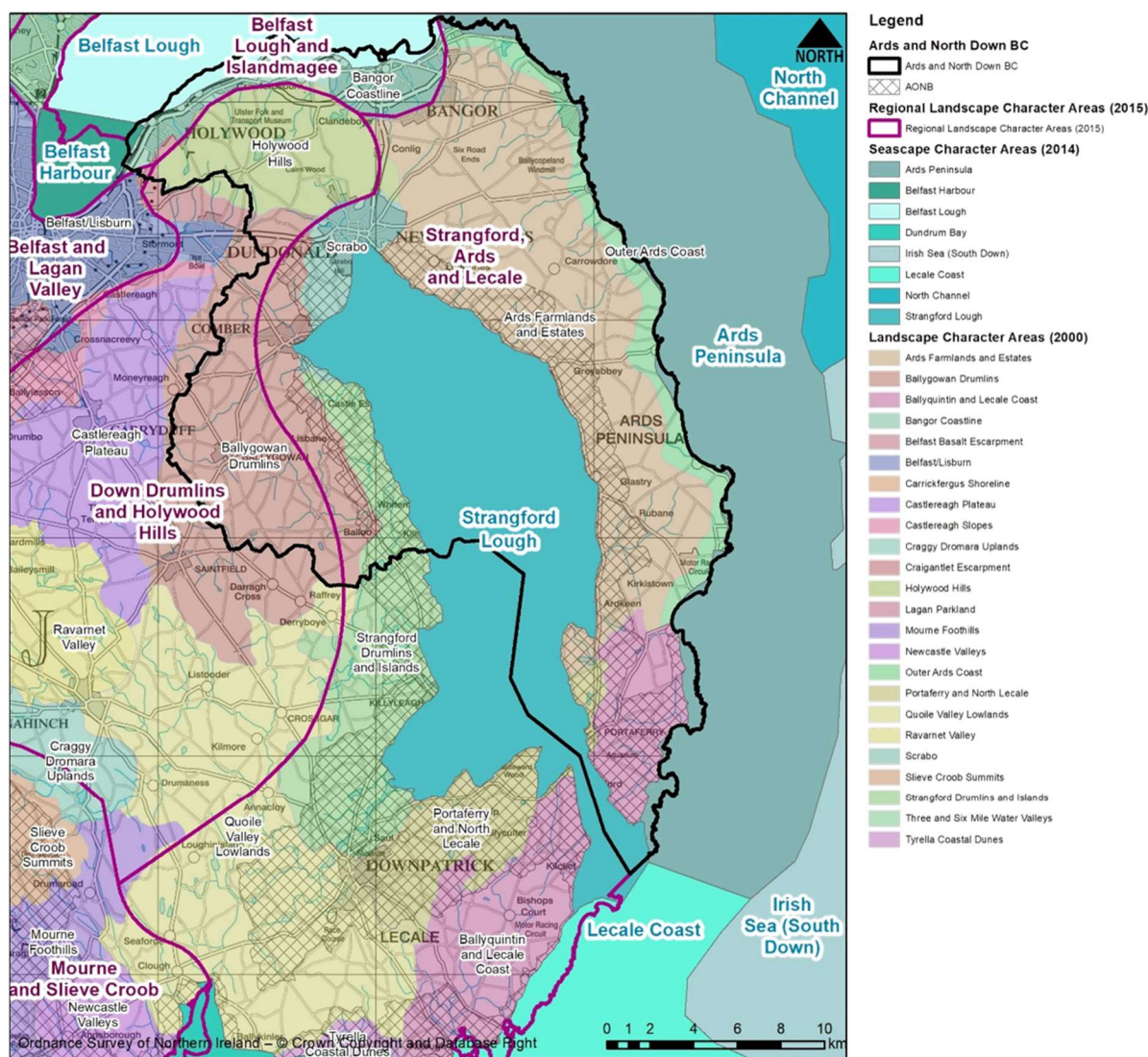
² Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership [online] Strangford & Lecale AONB Management Plan (2023-2027) (found at <https://strangfordlough.org/strangford-lecale-aonb-management-plan-2023-2027/>)

³ Ards & North Down Borough Council's Local Development Plan POP Position Paper – Landscape Character Assessment

⁴ Ards & North Down Borough Council's Local Development Plan POP Position Paper – Landscape Character Assessment

⁵ <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/landscape-character-northern-ireland>

Figure 5.13.1: Landscape and Seascape Character Areas and Designations



Regional Landscape Character Areas

The Northern Ireland Regional Landscape Character Assessment (NIRLCA) 2015 divided the country into 26 distinct areas known as Regional Landscape Character Areas (RLCAs). These provide a more strategic approach to landscape than the LCAs and are based upon information to do with people, place, nature, culture and perception¹. There are four RLCAs in the Borough and these are shown in Figure 5.13.1. These range in character from developed coasts and urban areas (Belfast Lough and Islandmagee RLCA, and the Belfast and Lagan Valley RLCA), to extensive drumlins and rural lowlands with views of the Mourne (Down Drumlins and Holywood Hills RLCA), to Strangford Lough and Dundrum Bay with sandy beaches and rocky shores (Strangford Lecale and Ards RLCA). Descriptions for each include subjects like location, setting, key characteristics, forces/ indicators of change, and ecosystem services².

The inclusion of ecosystem services within a landscape-related designation is important as it highlights the multiple benefits feasible from an area primarily conserved for its landscape value. More information on ecosystem services is in the Natural Resources section (5.12).

¹ Ards & North Down Borough Council's Local Development Plan POP Position Paper – Landscape Character Assessment

² DAERA NIRLCA <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/services/regional-landscape-character-areas-map-viewer>

Although development pressure is a threat to landscape, the RLCAs recognised other 'forces for change'¹. In addition to various types of development, potential forces include climate change, coastal processes, intensive agriculture, plant disease and minerals.

Seascape Character Areas

In 2014, the Northern Ireland Regional Seascape Character Assessment was published with 24 Seascape Character Areas (SCAs) – a strategic approach to understanding the different areas along the coast and the interactions played out between land, sea, man and nature². Ards and North Down Borough has an extensive coastline of 115 miles. This encompasses Belfast Lough in the north and the towns of Holywood and Bangor, the harbour of Donaghadee on the coast of the Irish Sea, and the Ards Peninsula. The shores of Strangford Lough are also accountable as coastline with the towns of Comber, Newtownards and Portaferry located on its shores. In total, there are five SCAs that fall wholly or partially within Ards and North Down's jurisdiction. These include Belfast Lough, Strangford Lough, Lecale Coast, and Ards Peninsula. SCAs are shown in Figure 5.13.1. The location of the Council's key settlements and villages along the coastline highlights the importance of it to residents and visitors and the 'close connection' between the Council area and the sea³.

Local Landscape Policy Areas

Local Landscape Policy Areas (LLPAs) protect landscape features within or near to settlements that are important for their local significance, amenity value or landscape quality. LLPAs can also include features important for their historical or cultural value, as well as the setting, which helps to protect the feature from visual intrusion. There are 101 LLPAs in the Borough. These are shown in Map 7 of the LDP POP Position Paper on Landscape Character Assessment.

Area of High Scenic Value

One of the ten LCAs in the Borough has been identified as an Area of High Scenic Value (AoHSV) to help protect the setting of local settlements. The Craigantlet Escarpment lies between Belfast and Holywood, and is shared with two other Council jurisdictions – Belfast City, and Lisburn and Castlereagh City. It is shown in Map 8 of the POP LDP Position Paper on Landscape Character Assessment.

Development Pressure

As referred to in the Health and Well-being and Community sections of this report, there is a growing and ageing population in the Borough. This brings with it an increased level of development, which includes housing, public utilities, infrastructure and business. The LDP POP Position Paper on Public Utilities refers to how utilities can 'impact on visual amenity and environmentally sensitive features and locations'. The POP LDP Position Paper on Landscape also highlights how the built form has changed since 2000. Some examples include evolving residential designs, as well as new types of energy generation i.e. renewables.

NI has a high suitability for wind energy but this must be balanced with landscape considerations 'particularly given the designation of much of the western portion of the Peninsula as an AONB'⁴. Although the Borough may have a relatively low presence of wind generation compared to other Councils, it has a widespread distribution and yet 90% of the LCAs in the Borough have been assessed as of a high sensitivity to wind energy⁵. Development pressure across the Borough from renewables, housing and industry presents different threats and opportunities depending on local topography, landscape/seascape character and existing development pressures.

¹ <https://daera-ni.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/index.html?appid=dee491ff43c0415fbb986f74c92f39a9>

² Ards & North Down Borough Council's Local Development Plan POP Position Papers – The Coast

³ Ards & North Down Borough Council's Local Development Plan POP Position Papers – Landscape Character Assessment; The Coast (Map 1)

⁴ Ards and North Down Borough Council's Local Development Plan POP Position Paper - Public Utilities

⁵ Ards and North Down Borough Council's Local Development Plan POP Position Paper – Landscape Character Assessment

5.13.3 Likely Evolution of the Baseline without the Local Development Plan

In the absence of a new plan, there could be an increased risk overtime of losing or degrading landscape/seascape value because of over development or inappropriate development - siting or design. Without up to date information, it could become increasingly difficult to spatially manage new development in the context of local landscape and seascape character. Without an up to date plan there could be a higher risk of negative impacts on landscape or seascape in areas particularly sensitive to change because of the evolving type and amount of development pressure, including housing, industrial uses, renewables and recreational activities. It could also become difficult to futureproof existing landscape designations vulnerable to the predicted impacts of climate change¹. Likewise, there could be missed opportunities to improve local landscape and seascape.

5.13.4 Key Sustainability Issues for Landscape

- There are a variety of landscape and seascape types across the Borough that range from farmland to rocky shores and coastline, and wooded estates to urban centres. Landscape in the Borough includes 1 AONB, 10 Landscape Character Areas, 4 Regional Landscape Character Areas, 7 Seascape Character Areas - including 2 offshore, and 101 Local Landscape Policy Areas. All these landscape types have their own individual pressures.
- The Borough has 1 AONB – the Strangford and Lecale AONB. The AONB is designated as some of the most important landscape in NI and covers a significant proportion of the Borough. It is shared with neighbouring Council areas which requires partnership working when considering projects or plans that may impact upon the AONB. The AONB Management Plan serves as a collaborative framework for all stakeholders involved.
- Working with landowners and voluntary organisations including community groups is likely to become even more important to help ensure sustainable landscape and seascape management into the future.
- A variety of measures may be needed to help protect the different landscapes and seascapes from visual intrusion caused by new development pressure linked to energy, minerals, housing and business/ industry. For example, of the ten Landscape Character Areas, nine have been identified with a high sensitivity to wind energy. There are likely to be constraints on certain developments in some areas.
- The Borough has 115 miles of coastline which contribute significantly to its character. With much of the coastline included within the AONB designation and contributing to various landscape and seascape character areas, protection of the seascape resource must be given careful consideration when considering projects or plans that may impact upon it.
- The Borough's landscape and seascape quality is regionally important for tourism and is attractive to investors for housing, recreation and commercial / business development.
- Some parts of the Borough have been affected by development that has detracted from local rural character, individual landscape settings, and neglected boundaries. This highlights how landscape protection requires appropriate consideration of local landscape and seascape quality and incorporation of appropriate design, as well as continuous and active landscape management.
- It is important to protect, conserve and enhance landscape character, even when areas may have been degraded. Strategic and local level approaches to landscape protection are required.

¹ Ards & North Down Borough Council's Local Development Plan POP Position Paper – The Coast

- Ecosystem services are likely to become more of a consideration in landscape related decisions since their inclusion in the NIRLCA 2015.
- There are 101 LLPAs but there may be sites of a similar significance across the wider countryside and particularly in the rural Ards Peninsula that cannot fall under the LLPA designation.
- Sustainable landscape management is likely to require new working partnerships as many of the LCAs are shared with the neighbouring Councils of Newry, Mourne and Down; Belfast City, and Lisburn and Castlereagh City.

5.14 Historic Environment and Cultural Heritage/Resources

5.14.1 Review of Policies, Plans, Programmes and Strategies

The European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage of Europe 1992 and the European Convention on the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe 1985 (known respectively as the 'Valetta Convention' and the 'Granada Convention') place responsibility on member states to consider the conservation of archaeological resources and to reinforce and promote policies for the conservation and enhancement of Europe's heritage. The Xi'an Declaration on the Conservation of the Setting of Heritage Structures, Sites and Areas (2005) aims to contribute through legislation, policies, planning processes and management to better protect and conserve the world's heritage structures, sites and areas in their settings. The Faro Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (2005) places a requirement to enhance the value of cultural heritage through its identification, study, interpretation, protection, conservation and presentation. It also requires member states to promote cultural heritage protection as a central factor in the mutually supporting objectives of sustainable development, cultural diversity and contemporary creativity.

In the regional context, PPS 6: Planning, Archaeology and the Built Heritage, along with its addendum, sets out planning policies for the protection and conservation of archaeological remains and built heritage features. Supplementary planning guidance in the form of booklets incorporating local policies, design guides and baseline audits are published for Conservation Areas.

The SPPS provides policy relating to this objective in Chapter 6, paragraphs 6.1 - 6.30. The regional strategic objectives in the SPPS are to:

- Secure the protection, conservation, and, where possible, the enhancement of our built and archaeological heritage.
- Promote sustainable development and environmental stewardship with regard to our built and archaeological heritage.
- Encourage the link between conservation and economic prosperity.

Specific policy on the implementation of new LDPs is set out in paragraphs 6.28 and 6.29 of the SPPS. These link directly with the aims of the above-mentioned European Conventions.

The overarching policy within the SPPS recognises that townscape, built heritage, archaeology and cultural heritage form an important part of the character and appearance of our cities, towns, villages, small settlements, countryside and coast. They are also part of our culture and can contribute to our quality of life. The historic environment has the potential to benefit our community and our economy in terms of tourism and regeneration. They contribute to the sense of place in our towns, villages and smaller settlements and are part of what is unique about places in the Borough. The draft Marine Plan also includes among its core policies the requirement for public authorities to consider the potential impact of proposals on heritage assets and seascape.

Regional guidance recognises that quality natural assets, interesting architecture, and built heritage can contribute to a feeling of being somewhere unique, which contribute to the tourism offer. Reuse of both listed and locally important buildings can contribute to urban and rural renaissance, which can help vitality and footfall in settlement centres, supporting the local economy.

The Council's Corporate Plan 2024-2028 has the vision of 'A Sustainable Borough' and includes "a vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors" and "an engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment" among its strategic outcomes.

The Big Plan for Ards and North Down 2017-2032 includes the outcome that "all people in Ards and North Down feel pride from having access to a well-managed sustainable

environment". *The Big Plan* acknowledges the value of quality open and heritage spaces. It recognises that people benefit from having access to a well preserved historic environment, the benefits of which are often overlooked.

The Borough has a strong link to early Christian heritage through St Columbanus and Bangor Abbey, Nendrum Monastery and Movilla Abbey. It is part of the legend of St Patrick. Our built heritage extends to many medieval tower houses and the Cistercian Grey Abbey. The National Trust House and Gardens at Mount Stewart are also exemplary.

The area experienced significant change during the 17th century Plantation of Ulster, when there was a large influx of migrants from, in particular, Scotland. The effect of this period is still very evident today in the place names, surnames, dialect and a strong sense of an Ulster Scots culture, however many of the placenames and attributes in the Borough derive from earlier times, including the medieval and early Christian periods, and from the Irish, Norse and English languages.

The historic environment is intertwined with the interests of the natural environment, landscape/seascape character and natural biodiversity as all these characterise the interaction between people and place over millennia, each exerting influence over the other. The historic environment provides interesting ways to learn about the complexity of our past; it has proven positive impacts on health and wellbeing and has a key economic role to play through encouraging tourism and increasing quality of life. It is a finite resource that should be nurtured and promoted.

5.14.2 Baseline Information

A baseline of information is also presented in the LDP Position Papers including 'Historic Environment', 'Landscape Character Assessment' and 'Settlement and Placemaking'. The Historic Environment Division (HED) of the Department for Communities (DfC) has also published its digital datasets of the historic environment online¹ and regularly updates these. HED has also created a Historic Environment Web Map Viewer². This topic also overlaps with the Health and Well-being, Education, Economy and Employment, Natural Resources, and Landscape sections of this report.

Overview

The historic environment in Ards and North Down includes built heritage and artefacts from all periods of human settlement in Ireland from around 7,000BC to the 20th century. Parts of the peninsula landscape and history share similar attributes to those in the Lecale part of the recently designated Mourne Gullion, Strangford UNESCO Geopark.

The settlement of Bangor has monastic origins but its present form and character largely reflect its growth as a seaside resort in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries, following the arrival of the railway line in 1865. Holywood Conservation Area was designated in May 2004. A mix of Medieval, Victorian and Edwardian architecture, a well preserved historic street pattern and a unique landscape setting all contribute to the unique character of Holywood. Crawfordsburn originated in the 17th Century as a small settlement on an important routeway. It has retained elements of its 17th Century history, including the coaching inn in the village.

The quality of the built environmental heritage in many parts of the Borough is high and with this comes the need and responsibility to protect and conserve for our own and future generations to enjoy and experience.

Current UK climate change policy (discussed in more detail in Section 5.10, *Climate Change*) seeks to achieve 'Net Zero' carbon emissions by 2050. For new buildings, the embodied emissions from construction can account for up to half of the carbon impacts

¹ Department for Communities Historic Environment Digital Datasets (Date published: 19 July 2018)

² <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/services/historic-environment-map-viewer>

associated with the building over its lifecycle¹. Research published by Historic England² indicates that the sympathetic upgrade and reuse of existing buildings in preference to demolition and new build, will avoid the loss of CO₂ emissions already embodied within the buildings and can dramatically improve a building's energy efficiency. It adds that “*by extending the life of our cherished historic assets, we can materially reduce the need for high carbon consuming activities and materials*”. The CCRA 3 for NI summarises risks to cultural heritage from changes in precipitation, temperature increase, coastal processes and from unintended consequences of climate mitigation and adaptation activities in other sectors. It also highlights that Coastal heritage is particularly at risk from climate change, but there are also opportunities for new heritage discoveries to be revealed by climate-driven impacts³.

Listed Buildings

In 2024, there are 676 Listed Buildings in the Council area, 15 of which have been assigned Grade A status⁴. Their locations are shown in Figure 5.14.2 and include Mount Stewart, Bangor Town Hall, the Manor House at Donaghadee, Helen's Bay station and three 19th Century bridges.

The digital dataset of listed buildings is regularly updated by HED and the currently published version includes a further 959 'Record Only' entries. 'Record Only' entries are buildings/structures for which the heritage value is of some interest, but not sufficiently so to merit statutory protection as a listed building/structure. Such entries may indicate an asset of local interest or importance such as a church, a prominent shop or a row of buildings on a street. There may be cross-over with Local Landscape Policy Areas (LLPAs) and identified Heritage at Risk, discussed in more detail below.

Buildings at Risk

The Ulster Architecture and Heritage Society in conjunction with the Department for Communities (DfC), has compiled an online list of Heritage at Risk in Northern Ireland (HARNI)⁵. The HARNI register contains a selection of listed buildings, scheduled monuments and other historic structures, ranging from dwellings to large industrial complexes, which may not have a sustainable future without intervention. It highlights the vulnerability of our historic built environment and seeks to act as a catalyst for its restoration and reuse. There are 76 such buildings in the former Ards and North Down Council areas identified on the list, including houses, gate lodges and a water tower. While these are not exclusively 'listed' buildings, many entries are. Some of the buildings on this list have been repaired or restored since the list was compiled, however a number of buildings remain at 'critical' risk.

Sites and Monuments Record

Ards and North Down has a rich record of archaeological sites and historic monuments, especially along its coastlines. At the time of writing, the NI Sites and Monuments digital dataset includes 1,090 records for the Council area. Scheduled Historic Monuments are archaeological and historic sites and monuments that are afforded protection under Article 3 of the Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects (NI) Order 1995 and there are 88 such areas containing Scheduled Historic Monuments in the Council area (see Figure 5.14.1). One site is currently proposed for scheduling. The record includes assets such as prehistoric cairns and standing stones, early Christian era raths and a tidal mill, medieval fish traps, 18th/19th Century infrastructure for processing seaweed and more modern features such as World War II airfields, pillboxes and anti-aircraft defences. Important sites may continue to be discovered in the future through planned archaeological excavations, site

¹ Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) (2017). Whole life carbon assessment for the built environment RICS professional statement, UK. [online] Available at: <https://www.rics.org/uk/upholdingprofessional-standards/sector-standards/buildingsurveying/whole-life-carbon-assessment-for-the-builternvironment/> [Accessed: 29/03/19].

² Historic England (2020) There's No Place Like Old Homes: Re-use and Recycle to Reduce Carbon

³ Climate NI (2001) Evidence for the third UK Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA3) Summary for Northern Ireland

⁴ Department for Communities (online) Historic Environment Digital Datasets Last updated: 12 February 2024

⁵ Department for Communities Heritage at Risk Register for Northern Ireland [online] found <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/articles/heritage-risk> [Accessed 07/03/2024]

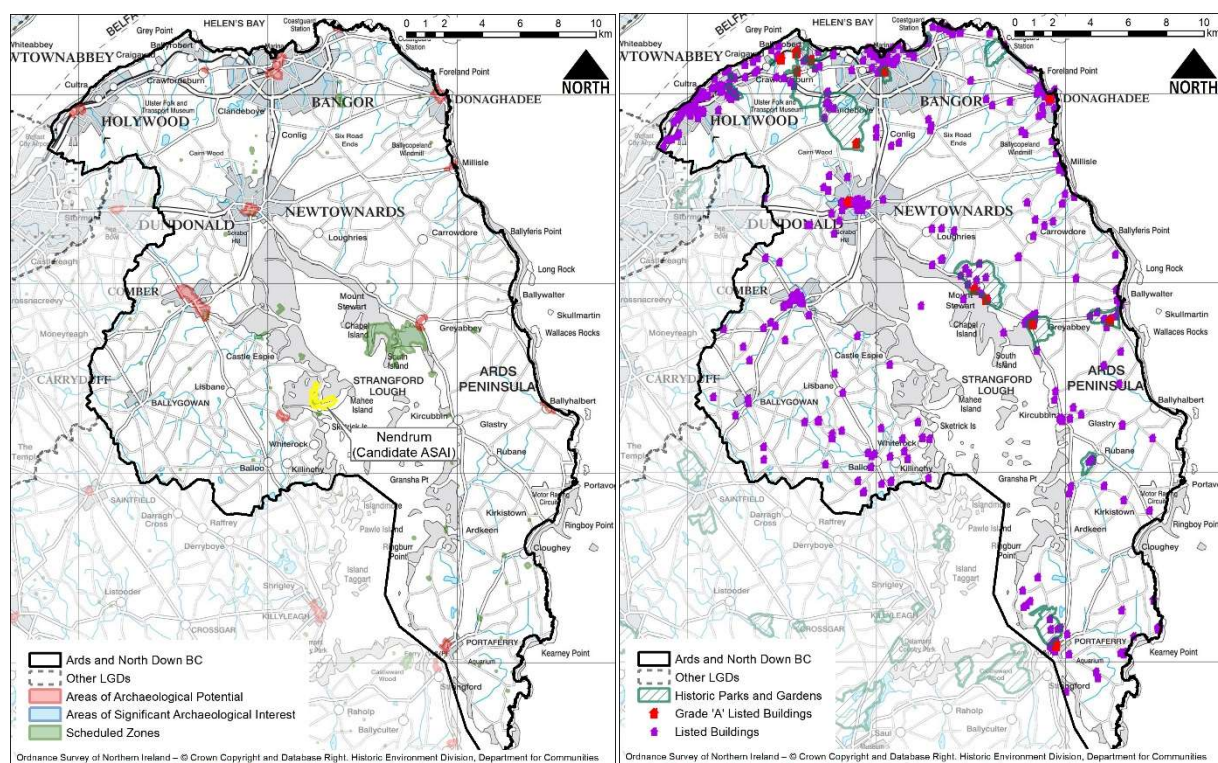
works associated with new development and agricultural activity. While the discovery of new archaeological sites is positive, the destruction of the remains, albeit through recorded excavation, will have a significant negative impact on the asset.

The Council area has 15 Monuments in State Care, including Scrabo Tower, Ballycopeland Windmill and Kirkistown Castle. With the exception of the newly added Grey Point Fort. These are listed in Appendix B of the 'Historic Environment' LDP Position Paper.

Areas of Significant Archaeological Interest

Areas of Significant Archaeological Interest (ASAI) are non-statutory designations that seek to identify distinctive areas of the historic landscape/seascape in Northern Ireland. ASAI's are designated by Councils through the LDP process. There are currently no ASAI's in Ards and North Down, however a landscape focused around Nendrum (on Mahee Island) has been identified as a candidate by the DfC's HED and will therefore be a consideration of the LDP. The built remains at Nendrum are considered to be NI's best example of a pre-Norman monastic enclosure with buildings.

Figure 5.14.1 & Figure 5.14.2: Historic Environment: ASAI, AAP and Scheduled Zones



Source: DfC Historic Environment Digital Datasets (Date published: 19 July 2018) and DfC scoping consultation response 07/08/2018

Area of Archaeological Potential

There are 12 settlements in Ards and North Down with identified Areas of Archaeological Potential (AAP). These are listed in Appendix A of the Historic Environment LDP Position Paper and shown in Figure 5.14.1.

The Gazetteer of Nucleated Historic Settlements is the result of a program of work within the DfC to identify historic settlement centres and from these, in some cases, identify new AAP or modify existing AAP. The draft Gazetteer includes 26 entries within the Borough, of which 15 do not currently have an AAP associated. These include areas of Ballywalter, Carrowdore, Craigantlet and Killinchy.

There are various existing policies for AAP and ASAI under the ADAP 2015 and BMAP 2015. The new LDP will consider the identification of AAPs through consultation with the DfC.

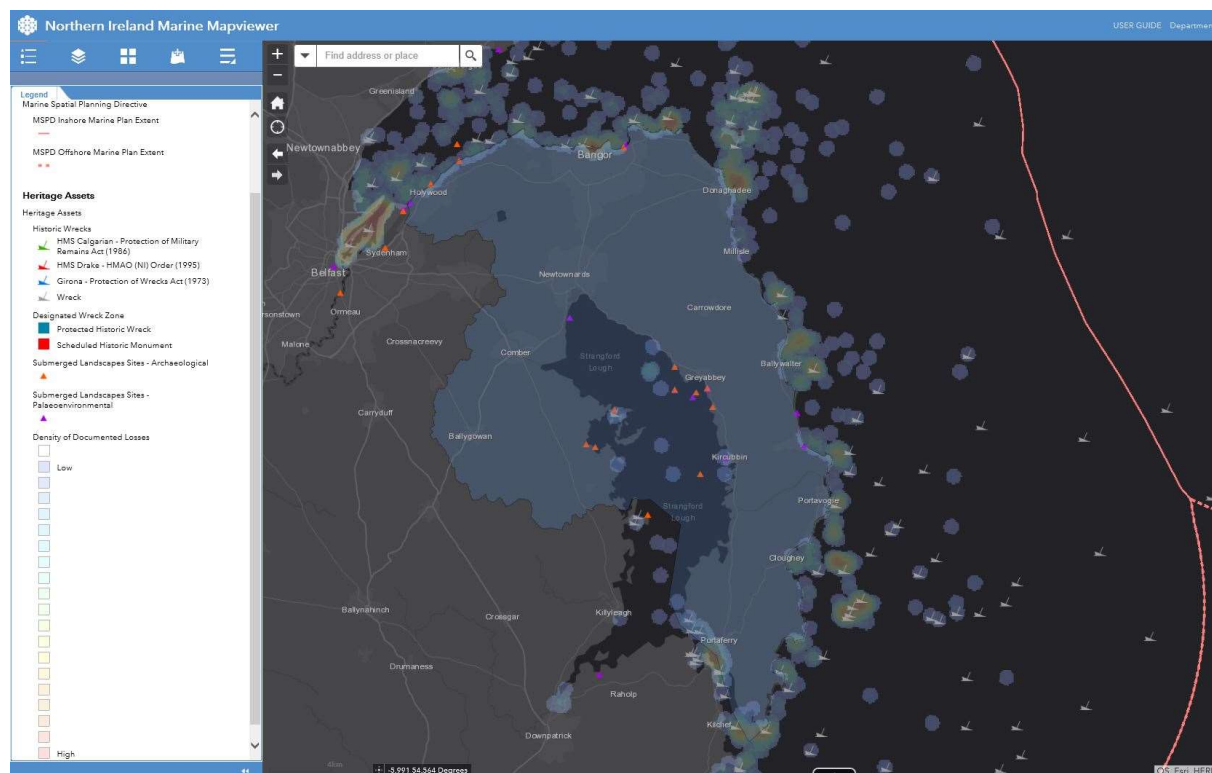
Marine Historic Environment

The nature of our coastline has resulted in several areas with high densities of documented marine losses (see Figure 5.14.3), in particular Donaghadee, Bangor and South Briggs (located between the former two sites). Around 17 historic shipwrecks are known to be located close (<500m) to our coastline, however many more documented shipwrecks remain unlocated. There are no wrecks with protected status located in waters adjacent to the Council.

Submerged Landscape Sites include palaeoenvironmental peat artefacts dating from around ten to twelve thousand years before present which were discovered at Roddan's Port and submerged tree stumps dated to around eight thousand years at Greyabbey Bay. Submerged archaeological finds dating from the early Mesolithic period (7,000-8,000 years ago) have been discovered at Holywood and a log boat dating from the Neolithic period (c. 6,000-4,500 years ago) was discovered at Greyabbey. There are 13 of these submerged archaeology sites in the Council area, shown in Figure 5.14.3. Development in the intertidal or marine area, such as undersea cables, offshore wind farms or tidal/wave energy arrays, has the potential to discover new evidence of the marine historic environment and may result in new sites requiring protected status.

The high-level preliminary vulnerability assessment of coastal erosion risk in NI published by DAERA with DfI in 2018 has undertaken an initial review of the vulnerability of heritage assets to coastal erosion¹. The preliminary assessment found that there are several assets of high heritage value located along the Council's coast in areas that have been indicated as potentially being at risk of coastal erosion. However, not all areas indicated as being at high risk are currently eroding, and further study is required to provide the necessary degree of evidence to inform coastal management decision-making.

Figure 5.14.3: Historic Environment Mapviewer: Shipwrecks and Submerged Archaeology



Source: Department for Communities Historic Environment Map Viewer

¹ DAERA & DfI [in association with Amey Consulting and HR Wallingford] (2018) Baseline Study and Gap Analysis of Coastal Erosion Risk Management NI - Figure 5

Industrial Heritage

The Council area also contains a wealth of remains from the industrial past, which are reminders of the economic as well as the social development of the area. Sites of industrial heritage can be found not only in the city and main towns, but also in rural locations and along the coast. They include many remnants of the former flax and linen industries, corn mills, windmills, slate quarries and gasworks. There are numerous bridges and other engineering features remaining from the former Belfast and County Down Railway. There are also several coastguard stations and disused harbours, reflecting the strong maritime tradition in the Borough and sustainable re-use of features and assets should be promoted. As discussed in section 5.8, the Comber greenway follows the route of the former railway from Comber to Belfast. Other parts of former railway routes in the Borough are under consideration for the development of new greenways.

Defence Heritage

Ards and North Down contains many defence heritage assets, largely associated with World War II, many of which are focused around the coast and in Newtownards. The current digital dataset¹ has 473 defence heritage records in the Council area. Assets include former airfields, air raid shelters, pillboxes and trenches. Many of the assets on the defence asset database are in very poor condition or have already been destroyed. The majority of former airfields in the Borough are now derelict, some have been reused or altered (e.g. part of the former RAF Kirkistown is now a motor racing track), and others are in a state of decay or have been partially demolished.

Historic Parks and Gardens

The historic parks, gardens and designed landscapes of Northern Ireland are a striking and important feature of our historic environment and are enjoyed as unique places for study, recreation, reflection and conservation. The recognition of historic gardens as a cultural resource deserving of preservation is enshrined in the Florence Charter (1982) of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS). Ards and North Down has a total of 16 Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesnes on the Register², 11 of which are Graded A or A+ and considered to be of exceptional importance within NI. Their locations are shown in Figure 5.14.2 and include 560ha at Clandeboye Estate and 352ha at Mount Stewart.

Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesnes contribute to the quality of the local landscape. Those that are open to the public may also provide an important outdoor recreational resource for physical activity or are a visitor destination. More recently, some of the Council's historic parks and gardens have been used as filming locations for films and television series. The use of heritage assets as filming locations can bring benefits, not only in terms of the local investment made by production companies during filming, but also through attracting tourism.

Conservation Areas

Conservation areas are places of special architectural or historic interest where it is desirable to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of such areas. The Borough has a total of three Conservation Areas. They are:

- Donaghadee
- Holywood
- Portaferry

The ADAP 2015 highlights Greyabbey as a historic village that possesses a special character and historic significance worthy of future designation as a conservation area. The aesthetic reasons for retaining the best of the built heritage has helped grow public awareness of conservation. Many environmental and economic benefits can also be derived

¹ Department for Communities (online) Historic Environment Digital Datasets Last updated: 12 February 2024 (defence heritage dated 11/01/2024)

² DfC, Love Heritage, HeroNI (2022) Register of Parks, Gardens and Demesnes of Special Historic Interest in Northern Ireland 2022

from Conservation Area designations, such as tourism and heritage related leisure activities, making them desirable places to live, work, shop and do business.

Areas of Townscape Character

Areas of townscape character (ATC) are areas that have been recognised as having distinctive character, but not sufficiently so to warrant Conservation Area status. A total of 18 Areas of Townscape Character and Areas of Village Character have been identified in the Borough. Their locations are shown on Map 5 of the 'Historic Environment' LDP Position Paper and they are also listed in Appendix E of the Position Paper.

Local Landscape Policy Areas

The features or combination of features that contribute to the environmental quality, integrity or character of a Local Landscape Policy Area (LLPA) are specific to individual settlements and differ from place to place.

Owing to the unique nature of the Council area in terms of its landscape, seascape, nature conservation importance, archaeological sites and monuments and their surroundings, there is a high number (101) of Local Landscape Policy Areas (LLPA) within the Council area. Their locations are shown in Map 7 of the Landscape Character LDP Position Paper and they are listed in Appendix D of the 'Natural Environment' LDP Position Paper.

The SPPS advises that LDPs should, where appropriate, designate LLPAs and bring forward local policies and guidance to maintain the intrinsic landscape, environmental value and character of such areas.

5.14.3 Likely Evolution of the Baseline without the Local Development Plan

In the absence of a new LDP, the RDS, the SPPS, extant Area Plans and PPSs would all still be applied. However, opportunities to consider and realise the value of the historic environment in future growth plans and place-shaping may be missed.

There are a large number of regionally or nationally significant heritage assets in the Council area, dating from Prehistoric and Mesolithic periods through to World War II. Without a new LDP in place, opportunities to designate new areas of special archaeological interest and identify areas of archaeological potential, or to protect vernacular heritage in the LDP might also be missed.

Opportunities to take advantage of the potential that archaeological, industrial, and defence heritage assets have as part of our tourism and visitor offer, and the potential of vernacular heritage and the unique historic landscape character of the Council area might also be missed, leading to reduced economic benefit for local communities.

The protection, conservation and regeneration of historic places can contribute to well-being in society through providing people with enjoyment, inspiration, learning opportunities, mental and physical health benefits, and a sense of place and identity.

Incremental erosion of historic/architectural character and landscape, seascape or townscape character or quality is a risk. Development might have a significant impact on the historic environment and/or people's enjoyment of it. In the absence of a LDP, the 'setting' of historic assets or places, which may extend far beyond the boundary or curtilage of the site, may not be taken into consideration. A new LDP is an opportunity to consider the reasons for these issues and identify the positive role that planning can play.

5.14.4 Key Sustainability Issues for Historic Environment and Cultural Heritage/Resources

- The Historic Environment and Cultural Heritage plays a role in maintaining and enhancing the sense of place in our settlements and rural locations which can be supported by building design recognising historic environment evidence in both urban and rural locations.

- The Borough contains centres, villages and towns which each have a unique sense of place, and character. Protecting this individual sense of place aspect has benefits for people and their pride in their community.
- Heritage assets are at risk from vacancy, neglect, decay, and development pressures. The innovative and conservation-led reuse of existing historic building stock should be promoted.
- The Borough's rich cultural and heritage assets can contribute to a high-quality built environment that helps to create attractive places for living, investing in and visiting. The vitality of historic town centres can be supported and enhanced by heritage-led development.
- There is recognition of the economic role of the historic environment in heritage-based tourism and promoting awareness, involvement and understanding of the historic environment. The additional attraction it has played in providing authentic and attractive locations for film and television production should be protected and expanded on.
- Certain types of permitted development may have effects on the historic environment.
- 'Buildings at Risk' should continue to be identified and efforts made by the relevant authority to maintain their regular use and/or support their restoration.
- The Borough has a rich archaeological heritage. This could be further explored and conserved through identifying new Areas of Archaeological Potential. Below ground archaeological heritage can be vulnerable to permanent destruction through new development and there may be requirements to preserve archaeological remains in situ.
- The setting and landscape of ASAs and any potential new ASAs should be preserved.
- Undesignated marine Heritage Assets such as Shipwrecks and Submerged Landscape Sites, whilst not statutorily protected, must be given appropriate evaluation and consideration.
- The Borough has a rich industrial heritage through cereals milling and flax production, along with its 18th and 19th Century transport engineering.
- Regionally important historic buildings, such as Mount Stewart, are set in a natural environment. The natural and historic environments can add value to each other.
- Encouraging and nurturing traditional skills and using the historic environment as an educational resource.
- Appreciating the value of built heritage should also apply to new buildings.
- There is ongoing loss of certain non-designated heritage assets such as historic farmsteads and buildings in the countryside, industrial and defence heritage, and historic shopfronts in some towns and settlements. Non-designated buildings which are of heritage or architectural importance in the context of overall landscape, townscape or heritage value should be recognised for their role in conserving these settings.
- There may be opportunities to maintain or reflect historic routeways and townland boundaries.
- Traffic pollution, poor air quality and noise pollution may adversely affect the historic environment.
- Heritage assets may be at risk from effects of climate change, including flooding, drying out, or coastal erosion.

6. THE SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL FRAMEWORK

Sustainability objectives have been identified through consideration of international, national, regional and local policies, plans, programmes, strategies and initiatives; baseline information at regional and, where available, at local level and apparent trends.

The following Sustainability Objectives are informed by the topic review and key sustainability issues identified in Chapter 5. The rationale for selecting each is outlined. The prompts used to assess plan options against the Sustainability Objectives are presented in the SA Guide in Appendix 5.

6.1 The Sustainability Objectives

The objectives for sustainable development in Ards and North Down Borough Council are to:

1...improve health and well-being.

Public policy seeks to increase healthy life expectancy, reduce preventable deaths, improve mental health and reduce health inequalities. Evidence shows that there is a need to address obesity, increase physical activity and reduce inequalities in health. It is also necessary to provide for the needs of an ageing population and minimize the detrimental impacts of noise. This can be achieved by creating an environment that is clean and attractive; encourages healthy lifestyles; protects tranquil and quiet areas and enables access to health care facilities for all.

2...strengthen society.

Regional policy is directed towards improving community relations and creating a safe society which is more united. Success will be represented by places which are inclusive, respect culture and identity, promote social integration and create a sense of pride. They will also be designed to feel safe and to reduce opportunity for crime or anti-social behaviour.

3...provide good quality, sustainable housing.

There is ongoing need for new housing in locations that meet regional policy, are accessible and balance the needs of society and the environment. The make-up of households is changing therefore design needs to meet long term requirements with good quality build to be sustainable. This objective should reduce homelessness and ensure decent, affordable homes with a mix of types.

4...enable access to high quality education.

Good education improves opportunities for employment and also contributes to the avoidance of poverty and healthier lifestyles. The provision of suitable accommodation for educational establishments in appropriate, accessible locations should play a part in making them more sustainable and reducing inequalities in education.

5...enable sustainable economic growth.

Regional policy seeks to develop a strong, competitive and regionally balanced economy. It is necessary to provide suitable and sustainable locations for employment, with flexibility where necessary, to reflect current and future distribution of jobs across sectors, encourage new business start-ups, facilitate innovation, regenerate areas, attract investment and make employment as accessible as possible for all. This will reduce unemployment and poverty by helping more people to earn a living and increase their income.

6...manage material assets sustainably.

Material assets such as infrastructure and sources of energy production are essential for society and the economy but need careful planning to ensure that they are designed for efficiency and to minimize adverse impacts. The concept of the circular economy treats waste as resource which should be managed sustainably to reduce production and increase recovery, recycling and composting rates; new or adapted facilities may be required.

7...protect physical resources and use sustainably.

Land, minerals and soil are resources which require protection from degradation and safeguarding for future use. Sustainable agriculture, sustainable tourism and sustainable use of minerals and geothermal energy can help to support the economy.

8...encourage active and sustainable travel.

There is a common goal to reduce traffic emissions and congestion, which means reducing single-occupancy car use and increasing use of other forms of transport, especially at peak times. The location of housing and key services can facilitate better access to public transport. Opportunities for active travel make travel more affordable and may bring added health benefits, while also reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Measures to manage car demand, such as parking and re-allocation of road space, which encourage a shift from car to public transport, walking and cycling will contribute to this goal.

9...improve air quality

Air pollution has serious impacts on human health as well as degrading the natural environment. This objective can be achieved through reducing sources of air pollution. Where air pollution cannot be totally excluded careful siting of development should avoid impacts on sensitive receptors.

10...reduce causes of and adapt to climate change.

International commitments require greenhouse gas emissions to be reduced to decrease their effects on climate. Measures that help reduce energy consumption and enable renewable energy help mitigate greenhouse gas emissions, however, climate change adaptation planning and implementation is essential to managing the resilience of our society and natural environment to an uncertain future, as well as for the known current and projected impacts of a changing climate. **11...protect, manage and use water resources sustainably.**

This objective encompasses reducing levels of water pollution, sustainable use of water resources, improving the physical state of the water environment and reducing the risk of flooding, now and in the future. It meets the requirements of Northern Ireland legislation, strategies and plans in support of the water environment (under the Water Framework Directive Regulations) and other legislation that relates to water and it takes account of the future impacts of climate change.

12...protect natural resources and enhance biodiversity.

International obligations which are adopted in Northern Ireland legislation, along with national legislation and policies require the conservation of biodiversity including flora, fauna and habitats. This is for their intrinsic value, and for the wider services that they provide to people, the economy and the environment, for example as carbon stores which can mitigate the effects of climate change. This objective includes protecting and enhancing biodiversity, including in coastal and marine areas, as well as protection of green and blue infrastructure to enhance the services that natural resources provide.

13...maintain and enhance landscape character.

International and national policies seek to conserve the natural character and landscape of the coast and countryside and protect them from excessive, inappropriate or obtrusive

development. This objective seeks to maintain the character and distinctiveness of the area's landscapes and seascapes, and to protect and enhance open spaces and the setting of prominent features, settlements and transport corridors.

14...protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment and cultural heritage.

The historic environment and cultural heritage are resources that inform our history and bring character and sense of place. They also attract visitors and contribute to the economy and bring vibrancy to the places where we live, work and relax. This can be achieved by protecting and enhancing Conservation Areas, townscapes and other sites of historic and cultural value including their setting, and by promoting the sustainable re-use of historic buildings.

6.2 Compatibility of the Sustainability Objectives

A comparison has been drawn between all of the Sustainability Objectives to identify any conflicts between them and is presented in Appendix 3. No Sustainability Objectives were considered to be incompatible with the rest of the SA Framework. In some cases the effect is uncertain. The Sustainability Objectives will therefore be reviewed at the next stage and the rationale updated to address this uncertainty.

6.3 Next Steps

This scoping report provides the SA Framework that has been used to appraise the Preferred Options Paper and prepare the SA Interim Report. The Scoping Report will be reviewed and updated at each subsequent step of plan preparation to reflect new context and baseline information.

6.4 Difficulties Encountered in Compiling the Scoping Report

With the establishment of the Council in 2015 and the new statutory Community Planning duty there has been a great deal of data collection for a variety of purposes including the Community Plan. It has not always been possible to align all of the evidence used for this scoping report with other evidence as timeframes and purpose for which data was collected may differ. Evidence papers for the LDP have also been updated prior to publication and it has not always been possible to reflect these however they will inform future updates to this report. The scoping report evidence will be reviewed and updated where necessary before publication of the draft Sustainability Report at Plan Strategy and Local Policies Plan.

Predicting effects and trends always involves an element of uncertainty or a need for assumptions to be made. The ability to predict effects accurately is also limited by gaps in the baseline and understanding of future trends. In some cases information is either not available at Council level or there is not a series of data to inform trends.

APPENDIX 1: COMPLIANCE CHECKLIST FOR STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Schedule 2 of The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004 lists the following information required for environmental reports, according to Regulation 11(3), (4). The location of this information in this Scoping Report or the Sustainability Appraisal Interim Report is identified.

Requirement	Location
1. An outline of the contents and main objectives of the plan or programme, and of its relationship with other relevant plans and programmes.	An introduction to the Ards and North Down Borough Council Local Development Plan (LDP) is presented in Chapter 3. The key plans, policies, programmes and strategies that have been considered in the SA are described at the introduction to each topic in Chapter 5 of the SA Scoping Report. A full list is included in Appendix 4 of the SA Scoping Report.
2. The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan or programme.	Baseline information is presented in Section 5 of the SA Scoping Report, under topic sections. Each section highlights the likely evolution of the baseline without the LDP. The Key Sustainability Issues are summarised at the end of each topic in Section 5 of the SA Scoping Report.
3. The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected.	The environmental characteristics of the Borough are presented in Section 5 of the SA Scoping Report, in baseline information and as Key Sustainability Issues.
4. Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including. In particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the conservation of wild birds and the Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora.	Section 5 of the SA Scoping Report identifies environmental problems. A draft Habitats Regulations Assessment for the draft Plan Strategy has been published for consultation alongside the draft Plan Strategy. A summary of the HRA is included in Section 1.3.3 of the SA Report.
5. The environmental protection objectives, established at international, Community or Member State level, which are relevant to the plan or programme and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation.	Section 5 of the SA Scoping Report outlines the main policy themes in the introduction to each topic. Appendix 4 of the SA Scoping Report outlines the relationship of the LDP with other plans, programmes and policies.
6. The likely significant effects on the environment, including short, medium and long-term effects, permanent and temporary	Likely significant effects are described in Sections 3 and 4 of the SA Report. They are reported in the context of the

Requirement	Location
effects, positive and negative effects, and secondary, cumulative and synergistic effects, on issues such as – (i) biodiversity; (ii) population; (iii) human health; (iv) fauna; (v) flora; (vi) soil; (vii) water; (viii) air; (ix) climatic factors; (x) material assets; (xi) cultural heritage, including architectural and archaeological heritage; (xii) landscape, and (xiii) the inter-relationship between the issues referred to in sub paragraphs (i) to (xii).	sustainability appraisal framework included in Appendix 5 of the SA Scoping Report. Interrelationships are discussed in Section 4 of the SA Report and Appendix 3 of the SA Scoping Report.
7. The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme.	Measures are reported in Section 3 of the SA Report and also in the matrices presented in Appendix 4 of the SA Report.
8. An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with, and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information.	Section 2 of the SA Report considers this in general. Section 3 and Appendix 4 of the SA Report provide more detail on the options appraised and any assumptions and limitations encountered in the appraisal.
9. A description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring in accordance with regulation 16.	A preliminary framework for potential monitoring has been included in Section 5 of the SA Report.
10. A non-technical summary of the information provided under paragraphs 1 to 9.	A non-technical summary is provided as a separate document to accompany the SA Report and the SA Scoping Report.

APPENDIX 2: SUSTAINABILITY OBJECTIVES AND RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (SEA) TOPICS

The objectives for sustainable development are to...	SEA Directive Topic
1...improve health and well-being.	Population Human Health
2 strengthen society.	Cultural Heritage including Architectural and Archaeological Heritage Population
3...provide good quality, sustainable housing.	Population Human Health
4...enable access to high quality education.	Population
5...enable sustainable economic growth.	Population Human Health
6 manage material assets sustainably.	Material Assets
7...protect physical resources and use sustainably.	Material Assets Soil
8...encourage active and sustainable travel.	Human Health Population Climatic Factors
9...improve air quality	Air
10...reduce causes of and adapt to climate change.	Climatic Factors
11...protect, manage and use water resources sustainably.	Water
12...protect natural resources and enhance biodiversity.	Biodiversity Flora, Fauna
13...maintain and enhance landscape character.	Landscape
14... protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment and cultural heritage.	Cultural Heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage Landscape

APPENDIX 3: COMPATIBILITY OF THE SUSTAINABILITY OBJECTIVES

Sustainability Objectives	1 Improve health and well-being.	2 Strengthen society.	3 Provide good quality, sustainable housing.	4 Enable access to high quality education.	5 Enable sustainable economic growth.	6 Manage material assets sustainably.	7 Protect physical resources and use sustainably.	8 Encourage active and sustainable travel.	9 Improve air quality.	10 Reduce causes of and adapt to climate change.	11 Protect, manage and use water resources sustainably.	12 Protect natural resources and enhance biodiversity.	13 Maintain and enhance landscape character.	14 Protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment and cultural heritage.
1 Improve health and well-being.														
2 Strengthen society.	✓													
3 Provide good quality, sustainable housing.	✓	✓												
4 Enable access to high quality education.	✓	✓	✓											
5 Enable sustainable economic growth.	✓	✓	✓	✓										
6 Manage material assets sustainably.	✓	✓	0	0	✓									
7 Protect physical resources and use sustainably.	✓	0	0	0	✓	✓								
8 Encourage active and sustainable travel.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	0	0							
9 Improve air quality.	✓	✓	✓	0	?	✓	✓	✓						
10 Reduce causes of and adapt to climate change.	✓	✓	✓	0	?	✓	✓	✓	✓					
11 Protect, manage and use water resources sustainably.	✓	0	✓	0	?	✓	✓	0	✓	✓				
12 Protect natural resources and enhance biodiversity.	✓	✓	?	✓	?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
13 Maintain and enhance landscape character.	✓	✓	?	0	✓	?	?	0	✓	✓	✓	✓		
14 Protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment and cultural heritage.	✓	✓	?	✓	✓	0	✓	?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

Compatible	✓	No relationship	0	Uncertain relationship	?	Incompatible	✗
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APPENDIX 4: REVIEW OF POLICIES, PLANS, PROGRAMMES AND STRATEGIES

This Appendix contains a list of Policies, Plans, Programmes and Strategies that have been considered in scoping the Sustainability Appraisal. It will be updated at each stage of plan preparation. Some additional documents, including local plans, may be referred to in the plan evidence papers or the body of the SA Scoping Report and these will be incorporated in this table in the updated Scoping Report which will accompany the draft Plan Strategy.

A number of cross cutting publications are presented first. Following that the publications are listed according to the most relevant topic, however it should be noted that some may be relevant to two or more topics. Year is the year of publication and scale indicates the spatial area it applies to. The lead is the department or organisation currently responsible for the publication and (not necessarily the one responsible for preparation of the publication).

For each publication a summary of the key objectives, requirements or advice is given with emphasis on what is most relevant to the LDP. A short comment is included on the implications of these for the LDP and/or how they will be addressed in plan preparation.

Acknowledgement is given to work carried out by Mid Ulster District Council, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council and the Strategic Planning Division of the Department for Infrastructure which contributed towards the source information for this review of plans, policies, programmes and strategies.

It should be noted that SA Scoping Report updates took place prior to the appraisal of the draft policy options which took place in early 2024. Policies, Plans, Programmes, etc that have been published since 2024 are included separately for information and so that they may be considered in the subsequent stages of the LDP.

	Title	Scale	Year	Lead Org	Objectives/Requirements	Implications for LDP
00. Sustainable Development	(draft) Marine Plan for Northern Ireland	NI	2018	DAERA	The Marine Plan for Northern Ireland will inform and guide the regulation, management, use and protection of the NI marine area. The Plan contains policies that reflect, clarify and signpost current legislation, policy measures and practices from the UK MPS and across NI and UK Government Departments and Agencies. Its policies will be used by public authorities in taking decisions which affect or might affect the marine area. The draft Marine Plan was published for consultation in May 2018.	The Marine Plan uses an ecosystem-based approach that will assist public authorities in managing the competing demands on the marine area in a more sustainable manner. Achieving sustainable development is at the core of the Marine Plan. Section 58 of the MCAA 2009 and section 8 of the Marine Act (NI) 2013 states that "a public authority must take any authorisation or enforcement decision in accordance with the appropriate marine policy documents, unless relevant considerations indicate otherwise". Public authorities must explain any decision not made in line with the UK Marine Policy Statement or an adopted Marine Plan.
00. Sustainable Development	Everyone's Involved – Sustainable Development Strategy (May 2010)	NI	2010	DAERA	The Sustainable Development Strategy aims to put in place economic, social and environmental measures to ensure that we can continue to grow our economy, improve our society and communities and use our natural resources in an environmentally sustainable manner. The Strategy also intends to strengthen the framework to address global issues such as climate change and sets out the following six principles: living within environmental limits; ensuring a strong, healthy, just and equal society; achieving a sustainable economy; promoting good governance; using sound science responsibly; and promoting opportunity and innovation.	Plan objectives should support the strategy. The Sustainability Appraisal will help shape proposals and policies in the LDP to be sustainable.
00. Sustainable Development	Focus on the Future - Sustainable Development Implementation Plan	NI	2011	NI Executive	While this implementation plan has expired some of the actions which have not been completed may be relevant in the future. DHSSPS committed to liaise with DOE Planners on the benefits of Health Impact Assessments and their potential to assist in encouraging the development of Healthy Urban Environments. DOE proposed to make legislation to enable the designation of National Parks by 2012.	The health impact assessment approach is not a statutory requirement but will be considered if there is development on this during plan preparation. Health and well-being is considered through sustainability appraisal.
00. Sustainable Development	Regional Development Strategy 2035	NI	2012	DfI	This document provides an overarching strategic planning framework influencing spatial development for the Region up to 2035, facilitating and guiding the public and private sectors. Taken into account are key drivers such as population growth and movement, demographic change, increasing number of households, transportation needs etc. It addresses economic, social and environmental issues aimed at achieving sustainable development and social cohesion. The eight aims of the RDS are to: Support strong, sustainable growth for the benefit of all parts of NI; Strengthen Belfast as the regional economic driver and Derry/Londonderry as the principal city of the North West; Support our towns, villages and rural communities to maximise their potential; Promote development which improves the health and well-being of communities; Improve connectivity to enhance the movement of people, goods, energy and information between places; Protect and enhance the environment for its own sake; Take actions to reduce our carbon footprint and facilitate adaption to climate change; and Strengthen links between north and south, east and west, with Europe and the rest of the world. The RDS contains a Spatial Framework and Strategic guidelines.	The LDP will support the RDS as part of the wider Government policy framework and should therefore be closely aligned with its objectives.

00. Sustainable Development	Securing the Future - delivering UK Sustainable Development Strategy	UK	2005	Four Nations (DAERA)	The Strategy takes account of developments since the 1999 Strategy, both domestically and internationally; the changed structure of government in the UK with devolution to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland; greater emphasis on delivery at regional level and the new relationship between government and local authorities. The five guiding principles are: living within environmental limits; ensuring a strong, healthy and just society; achieving a sustainable economy; promoting good governance and using sound science responsibly. Four agreed priorities are sustainable consumption and production, climate change, natural resource protection and sustainable communities.	The SPPS has a strong sustainable development theme, which aligns with the priorities of this Strategy, most notably in terms of climate change, renewable energy, sustainable consumption, waste management etc. In complying with the SPPS and carrying out sustainability appraisal the LDP will support this.
00. Sustainable Development	Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development	Inter-national	2015	United Nations	Seeks to end poverty and hunger everywhere; to combat inequalities within and among countries; to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies; to protect human rights and promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; and to ensure the lasting protection of the planet and its natural resources. It also aims to create conditions for sustainable, inclusive and sustained economic growth, shared prosperity and decent work for all, taking into account different levels of national development and capacities. Expressed through 17 Global Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets.	Through the influence of the sustainability appraisal the LDP seeks to contribute to these goals where they are within the scope of development planning.
00. Sustainable Development	UK Marine Policy Statement	UK	2011	Four Nations (DAERA)	The MPS facilitates and supports the formulation of Marine Plans, ensuring that marine resources are used in a sustainable way in line with the high level marine objectives. These are to: • Promote sustainable economic development; • Enable the UK's move towards a low-carbon economy in order to mitigate the causes of climate change and ocean acidification and adapt to their effects; • Ensure a sustainable marine environment which promotes healthy, functioning marine ecosystems and protects marine habitats, species and our heritage assets; and • Contribute to the societal benefits of the marine area, including the sustainable use of marine resources to address local social and economic issues. Currently it is also the policy document to be used for decision making for any proposal which affects, or might affect, the NI marine area. It will be used in conjunction with the Marine Plan for NI, once the Marine Plan is published and adopted in its final form.	Any development arising from the LDP will need to be in conformity with the MPS and NI Marine Plan (once the latter is adopted) in order to protect the marine environment, inclusive of the historic environment and heritage assets. Section 58 of the MCAA 2009 and section 8 of the Marine Act (NI) 2013 state that "a public authority must take any authorisation or enforcement decision in accordance with the appropriate marine policy documents, unless relevant considerations indicate otherwise". A public authority must have regard to the appropriate marine policy documents in taking any decision which relates to the exercise of any function capable of affecting the whole or any part of the UK marine area, but which is not an authorisation or enforcement decision.
000. Other / Cross-cutting	A Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland	NI	1993	DfI	In seeking to protect the environment and encourage sustainable development the PSRNI set out policies to meet the development needs of the rural area. The majority have been superseded by PPSs and SPPS, however Strategic Policies 2, 3, 4 and 18 still apply relating to Towns, Villages, Regeneration of Rural Settlements and Design in Towns and Villages.	The remaining provisions of 'A Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland' will be cancelled when all eleven Councils have adopted a new Plan Strategy for the whole of their Council area. However, to ensure that there is continuity in planning policy for taking planning decisions whilst Councils bring forward operational policies tailored to local circumstances within new LDPs, transitional arrangements shall apply.
000. Other / Cross-cutting	Aarhus Convention - United Nations Economic Commission for Europe 1998	Europe	1998	UNECE	The Aarhus Convention and its Protocol empower people with the rights to access easily information, participate effectively in decision-making in environmental matters and to seek justice if their rights were violated. They protect every person's right to live in an environment adequate to his or her health and well-being. Ratified in	The plan will achieve this through the consultation process, as outlined in the Statement of Community Involvement. Ensure that public are involved and consulted at all relevant stages of SA production. This should be reflected in the Statement of the Community Involvement

					UK in 2005. Established a number of rights of the public with regard to the environment. Local authorities should provide for: • The right of everyone to receive environmental information; • The right to participate from an early stage in environmental decision making; • The right to challenge in a court of law public decisions that have been made without respecting the two rights above or environmental law in general.	
000. Other / Cross-cutting	An Integrated Coastal Zone Management Strategy for Northern Ireland 2006 – 2026	NI	2006	DAERA	Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) aims to establish sustainable levels of economic and social activity in coastal areas while protecting the coastal environment. ICZM seeks to reconcile the different policies that have an effect on the coast and to establish a framework that facilitates the integration of the interests and responsibilities of those involved in the development, management and use of the coast.	The ICZMS sets out main issues which may be relevant to the LDP: Marine Spatial Planning, Commercial fisheries, Climate change and coastal protection, Water quality, Tourism and recreation, Renewable energy, Ports and marine transportation, Extractive industries, Natural and Built heritage, Data, information and mapping. The LDP's proposals and policies may support the ICZMS.
000. Other / Cross-cutting	Ards and Down Area Plan 2015	Council	2015	DOE	The plan sets out the Plan Framework comprising allocations, designations, policies and proposals relating to the Plan Area as a whole, intended to complement, and with reference to, the Regional Policy Context; and defines and translates broad policies and proposals into site specific designations, policies, proposals and zonings for the individual Council areas included in the Plan Area	This plan will be considered in preparing new LDP policies.
000. Other / Cross-cutting	Ards and North Down Corporate Plan (2015-2019)	Council	2015	Ards & North Down BC	The corporate plan sets the overall strategic direction for the Council in the 2015-19 period. The plan has a number of objective linked to people, prosperity and place. The vision for the Borough is to make it a 'more prosperous, vibrant, healthy, sustainable' Borough and 'where people enjoy an excellent quality of life'.	This strategic plan will complement the LDP and the two plans will work in tandem towards the same vision.
000. Other / Cross-cutting	Building a Better Future: The Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 2011-2021 (ISNI)	NI	2011	NI Executive	The Investment Strategy sets out the forward programme for investment in public infrastructure. It identifies priority areas for investment in sustainable 21st century infrastructure and is intended to assist government and private sector partners to plan ahead. The 'Procurement Pipeline' identifies 197 infrastructure projects across networks, environment, health and education and when they are anticipated to be procured.	The 'Procurement Pipeline' available on the home page identifies infrastructure projects across networks, environment, health and education and when they are anticipated to be procured.
000. Other / Cross-cutting	Delivering Social Change Framework	NI	2012	EO	The DSC framework was established to deliver a sustained reduction in poverty and associated issues across all ages and to improve children and young people's health, well-being and life opportunities. A Delivering Social Change Fund was established to support The Social Investment Fund; The Delivering Social Change Signature Programmes; Childcare. The six initial Signature Programmes included support for Family Support Hubs; Nurture Units, Social Enterprise Hubs. Three new Signature Programmes announced in 2014 include support for people with dementia and their families and carers; early intervention services for young families and expansion of shared education, supporting schools to share resources and people. The Social Investment Fund is under a separate entry in this register.	Delivering Social Change prompts collaboration and co-ordination among Government Departments to improve the manner in which they interact in the lives of children and young people. It also includes programmes for dementia services. The programme has resulted in some new and proposed community facilities that should be considered in plan preparation. It includes the establishment of Family Support Hubs, Social Enterprise Hubs and Nurture Units. The Shared Education programme provides the opportunity for pupils from different community backgrounds to learn together and may require the development of new facilities. It may identify needs for new facilities to improve the lives of children and young people with disabilities.
000. Other	Department for Infrastructure Strategic Plan for Greenways	NI	2016	DfI	This is the base report for 'Exercise Explore Enjoy: A Strategic plan for Greenways'. It presents a strategic approach and overview to the development of a shared greenway network which is planned at a	Greenways can produce both environmental and social benefits, because they are easily accessible and can bring nature and people together. The development of traffic free infrastructure, particularly

					regional level and allows people to link to places locally, regionally and nationally by active modes of travel.	greenways, can also have a positive impact on social inclusion and encouraging new and harder to reach groups to take up cycling and walking. The LDP can help to support these objectives.
000. Other / Cross-cutting	DOE Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS): Planning for Sustainable Development	NI	2015	DfI	Sets out the Department's regional strategic policies for securing the orderly and consistent development of land in Northern Ireland. Planning authorities should pursue social and economic priorities alongside the careful management of our built and natural environments in order to achieve sustainable development. The SPPS sets out five core planning principles: Improving health and well-being; Creating and enhancing shared space; Supporting sustainable economic growth; Supporting good design and positive place making; and Preserving and improving the built and natural environment.	The provisions of the SPPS must be taken into account in the preparation of Local Development Plans, and are also material to all decisions on individual planning applications and appeals.
000. Other / Cross-cutting	Framework for Co-operation Spatial Strategies of Northern Ireland & the Republic of Ireland	NI & RoI	2010	DfI	This document examines the key planning challenges faced by both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland and discusses the potential for co-operation in spatial planning. It sets out a framework for cooperation at different levels within the public sector which should result in mutual benefits. These benefits can be at the local border area level and at the wider level. Four priority areas for cooperation are: Enhancing Competitiveness, Competitive Places (i.e. linked cross-border cities), Environmental Quality and Spatial Analysis.	At the local level it will be important that the guidance in the RDS and [Irish] NSS is incorporated into regional planning guidelines, development plans, community plans and regeneration schemes and that there is support for cross border projects and initiatives for both urban and rural areas. Integrated planning processes at the local level, where agencies and authorities in both jurisdictions work together on a cross border basis, are essential in enhancing the potential and quality of strategic places on the island, that straddle such cross-border locations.
000. Other / Cross-cutting	Integrated Strategy for Tourism - Regeneration-Economic Development 2018-2030	Council	2018	Ards & North Down BC	The Integrated Strategy aims to stimulate tourism, regeneration and the economic development sector. 'Blue Green, Creatively Connected' is the vision for the Integrated Strategy which aspires to maximise the economic opportunities associated with the Boroughs blue green economy whilst protecting its natural assets. The plan recognizes the social benefits of greater connectivity between blue green space and the potential creative and cultural opportunities associated with it.	This plan will be considered in preparing new LDP policies.
000. Other / Cross-cutting	Ireland's Marine Strategy Framework Directive Article 19 Report Initial Assessment, GES and Targets and Indicators	RoI	2013	DECLG, MI	The first step in the implementation of the MSFD in Ireland was an Initial Assessment of Ireland's marine waters and establishment of a comprehensive set of environmental targets and associated indicators for the marine waters so as to guide progress towards achieving Good Environmental Status. Each state is required to ensure they take appropriate action by 2020 to maintain or achieve Good Environmental Status.	Should an LDP have specific proposals for its coastline, including facilitating developments that utilise the marine environment, these could be either supportive or in conflict with the objectives of the Directive.
000. Other / Cross-cutting	NI Water Recreation and Access Policy	NI	2013	NI Water	NI Water is one of the largest land owners in Northern Ireland, having responsibility for approximately 8,600 hectares throughout the province. A significant proportion of this land has recreational appeal and is regularly accessed by members of the public. The Recreation and Access Policy sets out the way public access arrangements are communicated and controlled, and provides the public with clear guidance that governs recreational activities and access on NI Water-owned lands and waters. Appendix A lists facilities with public access, existing agreements and permitted activities.	This policy may identify sites with potential for recreation, contributing to health and well-being and/or economic growth.

000. Other / Cross-cutting	Our Passion, Our Place - Northern Ireland Environment Agency Strategic Priorities 2012 to 2022	NI	2012	DAERA	The plan outlines the strategic direction for NIEA. Four priority areas: healthy natural environment, people and places, sustainable economic growth and using resources well with a series of strategic goals. In respect of development planning NIEA will make sure planning decisions and business practices are guided by sound environmental principles and apply a risk based approach to its regulatory activities. Provide timely and authoritative input to strategic planning and development projects. Adopt an ecosystems approach in the advice it provides.	The majority of the sustainability appraisal objectives can be linked to the strategic aims of this document. NIEA advice and evidence will be used to inform plan preparation.
000. Other / Cross-cutting	Planning in the Coastal Area: A developer's guide to planning considerations and environmental responsibilities	NI	2017	DAERA	This guidance document aims to explain how some onshore development may impact on the marine area. It also describes the legislative and regulatory framework within which we manage our marine area. This document aims to outline how development along our coast can be managed in an integrated manner and how potential impacts of onshore development on the marine environment can be avoided or mitigated through early engagement and collaborative working.	This document has been produced to assist planning authorities, applicants and agents in their understanding of land and sea interactions. In addition, as planning legislation extends to the mean low water mark, there is an area of overlapping responsibilities in the intertidal area. The LDP should aim to align with legislation on the marine area to achieve an integrated approach to the management of the intertidal area along the coastline.
000. Other / Cross-cutting	Rural White Paper Action Plan	NI	2012	DAERA	This document sets out the vision for NI's rural areas and the actions which Departments will take in support of achieving that vision and to help ensure the future sustainability of rural areas. The vision includes vibrant and strong rural communities; improved infrastructure, transport and key services; strong community infrastructure which can avail of economic, social and cultural opportunities; and better linkages between rural and urban areas.	Policies are proposed in relation to sustainable development in the countryside, transport and land use. Planning policy will promote sustainable development, well-being and economic development which are aligned with the vision for rural areas. There does seem to be a focus on town centres and city centre vitality, which could take attention away from rural issues. The LDP objectives support this. It sets out to support vibrant rural communities, facilitate development of new, accessible, community facilities, and improve connectivity between/within settlements in terms of telecommunications and transport infrastructure in particular. The Plan will promote sustainable development, well-being and economic development which are aligned with the vision for rural areas.
000. Other / Cross-cutting	Strangford Lough and Lecale Action Plan 2013 - 2018	Regional	2013	Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership	The landscape, built heritage and natural environment of Strangford and Lecale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty are fundamental to the well-being and vibrancy of local communities. They attract and interest visitors, and they generate wealth for local and wider economies. For these reasons, as well as for their intrinsic value, we must work together to protect and enhance our heritage, while fostering appropriate human activities and developments. AIM 1: To conserve and engage people with the built and natural heritage. AIM 2: To use heritage to promote the health and well-being of local people and visitors. AIM 3: To build prosperity and facilitate Research and Development through the environmentally sustainable use of the heritage.	This is a non-statutory plan, however the aims of this plan should be taken into account in LDP preparation. The LDP can help to support the aims of the plan and there are inter-relationships with the sustainability themes of health and well-being, natural resources and the historic environment and cultural heritage.
000. Other / Cross-cutting	The Big Plan for Ards and North Down 2017-2032	Council	2017	Ards & North Down BC	The Big Plan provides an overarching framework setting out a shared vision and ambition that Ards and North Down's Strategic Community Planning Partnership has agreed to work towards over the next 15 years. The overarching, cross-cutting ambition of The Big Plan is to have empowered, resilient individuals and communities, to reduce inequalities; to promote good relations and sustainability; and to improve the accessibility of all public services.	The Local Government Act (NI) 2014 and the Planning Act (NI) 2011 create a statutory link between the Community Plan and the next Local Development Plan. The LDP must therefore take account of and will be informed by the Community Plan.

000. Other / Cross-cutting	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (1982)	International	1982	United Nations	The Law of the Sea Convention defines the rights and responsibilities of nations with respect to their use of the world's oceans, establishing guidelines for businesses, the environment, and the management of marine natural resources. The Convention sets out basic principles for the protection of underwater cultural heritage. Amongst its main principles are an obligation to preserve underwater cultural heritage, with in situ preservation as first option, and a ban on its inappropriate commercial exploitation.	The Convention sets the framework for protecting underwater cultural heritage at sea. Signatories "have a duty to protect objects of an archaeological and historical nature found at sea and shall cooperate for this purpose". The LDP should have regard for this principle.
000. Other / Cross-cutting	Sustainability for the future DAERA' Plan to 2050	NI	2021	DAERA	This high-level strategy sets out DAERA's mission for the next 3 decades and beyond, to promote sustainable economic growth whilst restoring and enhancing our environment for the next generation. Supported by robust science as our evidence base, we will continue to ensure the competitive development of the agri-food, fishing and forestry sectors of the Northern Ireland economy, having regard for the need of the consumers, the welfare of animals and the conservation and enhancement of the environment. Enhancing our environment matters, as a healthy environment is interlinked with our health and wellbeing.	The LDP can help to support the delivery of the Strategy's Strategic Priorities through policies which facilitate sustainable agriculture and forestry development, protect and enhance the natural environment and support sustainable rural communities.
000. Other / Cross-cutting	[Draft] Supplementary Planning Guidance to PPS 18 'Renewable Energy' Anaerobic Digestion	NI	2010	DfI	The SPG provides additional advice and guidance specific to Anaerobic Digestion (AD) to complement the background information already set out in the Best Practice Guidance to PPS 18. AD proposals raise a number of planning issues including visual and landscape impacts arising from industrial scale plant/buildings; potential odour impacts, air emissions, noise impacts, and traffic impacts.	LDP policies in respect of development in the countryside, waste and landscape may influence the future development of these facilities.
000. Other / Cross-cutting	[Draft] Today we act. Tomorrow we thrive. Green Growth: Draft Green Growth Strategy for Northern Ireland - Consultation	NI	2021	NI Executive	Launched for consultation in October 2021, this is an over-arching multi-decade Strategy which will set out the long-term vision and a solid framework for tackling the climate crisis by balancing climate action with the need for a clean, resilient environment and economy.	Sets out a framework for delivery with which all other NI government policies and strategies must align. New policies and programmes should align with the need to address climate change, develop green jobs and improve our environment.
000. Other / Cross-cutting	[draft] Circular Economy Strategy for Northern Ireland - Consultation	NI	2023	DfE	The Circular Economy is seen as an opportunity to secure access to vital resources, maintain global competitiveness and ensure a high-quality environment. Circular Economy approaches can cut industrial emissions, contributing to climate change mitigation, reduce the production of, and exposure to hazardous substances. In the same way that the European Circular Economy Action Plan is framed within the wider Green Deal programme, our Circular Economy Strategy will be a critical deliverable within Northern Ireland's Climate Action Plan and the Green Growth Strategy.	The LDP can help to support the objectives of the Strategy [once adopted] to increasing efficiency, minimising waste and maintaining the value of our products and materials.
01. Health & Well-being	A Fitter Future For All - Outcomes framework 2015 - 2019	NI	2015	DoH	A 'Fitter Future for All' set a challenging target of reducing levels of obesity over its ten year life span – this is more demanding than previous targets which sought to halt the rise in levels of obesity. Following a review of the first years of the plan, an updated framework was published for 2015-2019.	Although expired, this framework can help to inform the LDP of target areas for reducing obesity levels in children and adults. The LDP can support objectives of creating a safe environment to encourage and promote increased physical activity.
01. Health & Well-being	A Fitter Future For All: Framework for Preventing and Addressing Overweight	NI	2012	DoH	Fitter Future for All is a framework to help reduce the harm related to overweight and obesity. This framework aims to: empower the population of Northern Ireland to make health choices, reduce the risk of overweight and obesity related diseases and improve health	The LDP can help to support and deliver the objectives of this framework by encouraging and enabling safe environments which promote increased physical activity.

	and Obesity in Northern Ireland				and wellbeing, by creating an environment that supports and promotes a physically active lifestyle and a healthy diet. New outcomes to aid implementation of the framework over the 2015-19 period have been developed.	
01. Health & Well-being	Connected Health Economy	NI	2013	DoH	Developing a connected health economy: the economy and jobs initiative included a number of measures to help support economic growth, including a commitment to establish a Task and Finish Group under the remit of the Connected Health and Prosperity Board, to exploit the economic opportunities from the health and social care (HSC) sector.	This may inform future economic investment in the health and social care sector.
01. Health & Well-being	Health and Wellbeing 2026 - Delivering Together	NI	2017	DoH	This plan sets out a 10 year approach to transforming Health and Social Care. It builds on the strong foundations laid by 'Transforming Your Care' and other programmes of change and is the Executive's response to the 'Bengoa Report', a 2016 report prepared by an Expert Panel tasked with considering the best configuration of Health and Social Care Services in Northern Ireland.	The Plan includes proposals on reconfiguration and change, including the objective to bring forward proposals for the location and service specification for Elective Care Centres, and Assessment and Treatment Centres. The LDP can help to directly support the delivery of health and social care development where there is an identified need and can also indirectly support other objectives of the plan, such as facilitating the delivery of communications infrastructure for e-Health and Care. The consideration of policy on adaptability and accessibility in homes may help to facilitate the Plan's aims to deliver 'acute care at home' in the future.
01. Health & Well-being	Making Life Better: A Whole Strategic Framework for Public Health 2013-2023 Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (June 2014)	NI	2013	DoH	The strategic framework for public health designed to provide direction for policies and actions to improve the health and well-being of people in Northern Ireland and to reduce health inequalities. The framework is not just about actions and programmes at government level, but also provides direction for work at both regional and local levels with public agencies, including local government, local communities and others, working in partnership. Through strength of coordination and partnership, the framework will seek to create the conditions for individuals and communities to take control of their own lives, and move towards a vision for Northern Ireland where all people are enabled and supported in achieving their full health and well-being potential.	Many aspects are directly relevant to the LDP, for example promoting age-friendly environments and designating Quiet Areas.
01. Health	Mountain Bike Strategy for Northern Ireland 2014 - 2024.	NI	2014	Outdoor NI	This strategy aims to generate approximately £25 Million per annum to the local economy by 2024, as a direct result of mountain biking.	Informs on a potential source of outdoor recreational activity and tourism opportunity and so is relevant to the sustainability theme of economy and employment as well as health and well-being.
01. Health & Well-being	Noise Policy Statement for Northern Ireland	NI	2014	DAERA	Through the effective management and control of environmental, neighbour and neighbourhood noise the Noise Policy aims to: (1.) Avoid or mitigate significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life; (2.) Mitigate and minimise adverse impacts on health and quality of life; and (3.) Where possible, contribute to the improvement of health and quality of life.	These LDP can help with applying the shared principles that underpin the Executive's Sustainable Development Strategy: Living within environmental limits - Ensuring a strong, healthy, just and equal society - Achieving a sustainable economy - Using sound science responsibly - Promoting opportunity and innovation - Promoting good governance.
01. Health & Well-being	Northern Ireland's Road Safety Strategy to 2020	NI	2011	DfI	Sets out the vision and presents measures for improving road safety in Northern Ireland up to 2020, including targets for reductions in deaths and serious injuries to be achieved over that period. Key Challenges most relevant to LDP include: • continuing to reduce the numbers of road deaths and serious injuries; • focusing specifically on improving safety on rural roads; • improving our knowledge and	The LDP may have scope to contribute to addressing the identified challenges in its transport, infrastructure and rural development policies.

					understanding of, and broadening involvement in, solving road safety problems.	
01. Health & Well-being	Planning Policy Statement 8 Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation (DOE 2004)	NI	2004	DfI	This PPS sets out the Department's planning policies for the protection of open space, in association with residential development and the use of land for sport and outdoor recreation, and advises on the treatment of these issues in development plans.	Six policies are incorporated in SPPS. Incorporation of the policies will be considered in preparing LDP policies.
01. Health & Well-being	South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust Population Plan	Regional	2013	SEHSCT	This sets out in detail the service transformation initiatives for delivery of the TYC proposals for this trust area. It includes the capital implications and requirements over the 3 year planning period. There will be continuing focus on reducing delayed discharge from hospital with investment in community infrastructure.	Although expired, this plan may inform unmet infrastructure requirements.
01. Health & Well-being	Transforming Your Care Department for Health, Social Services and Public Safety	NI	2011	DoH	Twelve major principles for change including: providing the right care in the right place at the right time; population-based planning of services; ensuring sustainability of service provision; incentivising innovation at a local level. 99 separate proposals for change across the range of health and social care services. There is a Strategic Implementation Plan and Population Plan for each Health Care Trust.	Can inform where facilities may be required to improve access to and quality of health services.
01. Health & Well-being	Our Great Outdoors - The Outdoor Recreation Action Plan For Northern Ireland	NI	2014	Sport NI	It is necessary for the Government, businesses and voluntary organisations to work together to achieve greater accessibility to the outdoors in a sustainable and responsible manner in order to realise its full potential. The Outdoor Recreation Action Plan will be the key driver to make this happen. Activity and eco-tourism are growing in Northern Ireland and the Outdoor Recreation Action Plan recognises this and highlights the need for further development to continue to grow this important sector. New developments that get people outdoors and active, but those that also create opportunities for improved visitor services, short breaks, meals, and hospitality are important for growing this element of the economy.	LDP can support the delivery of aims, in particular: "There are increasing opportunities and improved access and infrastructure for sustained and increased participation for everyone in a broad range of outdoor recreation activities".
01. Health & Well-being	Active Living - Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for Northern Ireland	NI	2022	DfC	Active Living, the new Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for Northern Ireland, through its Vision and associated key Themes and Goals, seeks to create a vibrant, welcoming, enjoyable, inclusive and successful sector for everyone, contributing significantly to a healthier and more resilient society. It recognises the important role that sport and physical activity plays across our island whether it is taking place on playing fields, in a stadium, a gym, on water, or in the mountains.	The LDP can help to support and deliver the objectives of this framework by encouraging and enabling safe environments which promote increased physical activity.
02. Strengthening Society	Active Ageing Strategy 2016-2021	NI	2016	NI Executive	The Active Ageing Strategy highlights how much older people contribute to the quality of life in communities; it draws attention to the issues hindering some older people from living more actively; it stresses their rights, value and contribution and challenges all forms of ageism: the negative stereotyping of older people. The Strategy is designed to make a real difference to the quality of life of older people to enable as many people as possible to enjoy the benefits and rewards of life for as long as possible. A draft series of indicators has been proposed to monitor and evaluate progress. Once finalised, this set of indicators will be used to demonstrate	This strategy has five strategic aims: 1. Independence 2. Participation 3. Care 4. Self-fulfilment 5. Dignity. Measures indicated within the strategy that are relevant to the LDP include the co-ordinated delivery of suitable warm housing, timely and reliable transport provision, user-friendly information and the active participation and citizenship of older people in decision-making on policies and the provision of services. Aims also include supporting older people to develop to the fullest of their potential by providing education, training, leisure and cultural opportunities.

					progress under each outcome and will be the main method we will use to measure the effects of implementation of the Strategy.	
02. Strengthening Society	Building Safer, Shared and Confident Communities: A Community Safety Strategy for Northern Ireland 2012-2017	NI	2012	DoJ	Building Safer, Shared and Confident Communities sets the direction for reducing crime, anti-social behaviour and fear of crime in Northern Ireland over the next five years. It builds on the positive progress made in recent years in reducing crime and anti-social behaviour, both by continuing to focus on what works, as well as a stronger emphasis on the guiding principle that prevention is better than cure. This Strategy provides the overall direction for community safety in Northern Ireland, and will help guide the work of a range of stakeholders including the Executive, local government, the voluntary and community sector and local communities.	Although expired, the LDP should take account of this Strategy and its related Action Plan(s). The LDP may have scope to contribute to encouraging and facilitating community safety through place shaping. It can also support the strategy's aim to create spaces that are for the community as a whole and which the community feel safe using or passing through, through encouraging good design. It can help support objectives to accommodate cultural differences between Catholic and Protestant communities whilst promoting "shared spaces" to bring people together with equality and opportunity.
02. Strengthening Society	Lifetime Opportunities – Government's Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy for Northern Ireland	NI	2006	EO	As part of the Northern Ireland Executive's commitment to tackling poverty and social exclusion this document outlined what would be done by the Northern Ireland departments and the Northern Ireland Office in working towards its overall objectives of: working towards the elimination of poverty and social exclusion in Northern Ireland by 2020; and halving child poverty by 2010 on the way to eradicating child poverty by 2020. The strategy is structured into four key life stages – Early Years (0 – 4), Children and Young People (5 – 16), Working Age Adults and Older Citizens. Each of the life stages is expressed in terms of an overarching goal followed by a series of long-term targets that will work towards achieving the goal. This strategy overlaps with some more recent strategies but continues to be reported on.	Identifies the conditions for bringing people out of poverty, including fuel, employment, older people and those in the rural community and for promotion inclusion for all. The proposals and policies in the LDP should consider these needs and support delivery against them.
02. Strengthening	NIHE - Race Relations Policy	NI	2006	NIHE	The five Race Relations Policy themes can be summarised as follows; Mainstreaming black and minority ethnic issues in policy development; Racial harassment and intimidation; Promoting black and minority ethnic social inclusion; Community participation and development; and Migrant worker issues.	The LDP can help to promote and encourage social inclusion.
02. Strengthening	NIHE Good Relations Plan	NI	2007	NIHE	The Housing Executive commits to Respond quickly and effectively to the needs of people in danger as a result of community conflict; Work in partnership with others to address the complex housing needs of a divided society; Respect the rights of people who choose to live where they wish; Facilitate and encourage mixed housing as far as this is practicable, desirable and safe.	The LDP can help to promote and encourage mixed housing and shared spaces, to help bring people from different communities together.
02. Strengthening	Planning Policy Statement 21: Sustainable Development in the Countryside	NI	2010	DfI	PPS 21 sets out planning policies for development in the countryside. For the purpose of this document the countryside is defined as land lying outside of settlement limits as identified in development plans. The provisions of this document apply to all areas of Northern Ireland's countryside.	A series of 16 policies which allow for development in the countryside in tightly defined circumstances. Many of these are carried forward through the SPSPS. The LDP will have to comply with these and other regional policy in any variation of these policies. Also relevant to the topic of sustainable housing.
02. Strengthening Society	Social Investment Fund	NI	2011	EO	The Social Investment Fund (SIF) was set up to deliver social change. It aims to make life better for people living in targeted areas by reducing poverty, unemployment and physical deterioration. The fund will run until March 2020 and all funding has been committed to projects prioritised by local Steering Groups. Some funding will capital support to enhance or create community and employment facilities.	Will however inform existing and proposed facilities that should be considered in plan preparation.

02. Strengthening Society	Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation	NI	2012	DAERA	This framework sets out the goals, objectives, priority action areas and outcomes for the Programme for Government commitment to bring forward a package of measures to help target the root causes of social isolation and help those in poverty in rural areas. In addition it aims to provide the necessary tools to identify the needs of vulnerable people/groups in rural areas, develop programmes/interventions to help alleviate poverty/social isolation and complement/add value to existing government strategies intended to tackle these issues.	Plan preparation includes consideration of the needs of those living in small settlements and the countryside to ensure that they have access to suitable and affordable housing as well as facilities. The Sustainability Appraisal incorporates Rural Proofing.
02. Strengthening Society	The Child Poverty Strategy	NI	2016	EO	The four high-level outcomes are, that: Families experience economic well-being; Children in poverty learn and achieve; Children in poverty are healthy; and Children in poverty live in safe, secure and stable environments. Indicators of success against these outcomes include those relating to employment levels in households with children, levels of obesity, hospital admissions for accidents at home or on the road and number of homeless families. Some of the most relevant actions to spatial planning are: Create jobs; Upskill the workforce and support young people and their family members into higher skilled, more secure and better paid employment; Reduce living costs; Ensure childcare is accessible and affordable; Promote health and well-being; Promote child, road, home and community safety.	Promotion of employment opportunities, provision for housing, increasing accessibility and creating safer environments will contribute to the objectives of this strategy.
02. Strength	Thinking Rural: The Essential Guide to Rural Proofing	NI	2015	DAERA	The objective is to ensure robust consideration and integration of rural issues at the outset of the policy making process. It should help to ensure fair and equitable treatment for rural areas through the development of policies which are proportionate to need.	The LDP can support the objective to provide for vital and vibrant rural communities whilst protecting the countryside in which they live, by accommodating sustainable growth within the countryside proportionate to the extent of existing rural communities.
02. Strengthening Society	Together: Building a United Community	NI	2013	EO	The strategy outlines how government, community and individuals will work together to build a united community and achieve change against the following key priorities: our children and young people; our shared community; our safe community; and our cultural expression. Its vision is 'a united community, based on equality of opportunity, the desirability of good relations and reconciliation - one which is strengthened by its diversity, where cultural expression is celebrated and embraced and where everyone can live, learn, work and socialise together, free from prejudice, hate and intolerance'. Includes a commitment to Create a 10-year Programme to reduce, and remove by 2023, all interface barriers including an Interface Barrier Support Package	By creating and shaping places spaces that are accessible and welcoming to all the plan will support this strategy. In some areas there will be specific requirements to address Interface Barriers.
02. Strengthenin	Together: Building a United Community 2016/17 Update Report	NI	2016	EO	The Strategy outlines how we in Government, in communities and as individuals will work together to build a united community and facilitate change in the key priorities of: Our children and young people; Our shared community; Our safe community; and Our cultural expression.	By creating and shaping places spaces that are accessible and welcoming to all the plan will support this strategy. In some areas there will be specific requirements to address Interface Barriers.
02. Strengthenin	Urban Regeneration and Community Development Policy Framework	NI	2013	DfC	This Policy Framework sets out the Department's policy objectives for urban regeneration and community development in Northern Ireland for at least the next decade. It will provide a clear strategic direction for the Department and inform its partners in central and local government and in the voluntary and community sector. The	This Policy Framework is wide-reaching in terms of the subjects it covers, for example Policy Objective 3 contains key actions relating to environmental improvement, protection and improvement of (historic) buildings and open spaces and developing an integrated transport network, whilst other Objective actions include

					Framework sets out four Policy Objectives that will form the basis of any future policy or programme development in urban regeneration and community development: (1) To tackle area-based deprivation. (2) To strengthen the competitiveness of our towns and cities. (3) To improve linkages between areas of need and areas of opportunity. (4) To develop more cohesive and engaged communities. It also contains a set of four Supporting Actions: (1) We will maximise the potential of regeneration and community development by supporting an evidence-based policy environment. (2) We will maximise the resources available to regeneration and community development by supporting an innovative financial environment. (3) We will support the development of skilled and knowledgeable practitioners in regeneration and community development. (4) We will promote an effective and efficient voluntary and community sector	development of commercial sites. LDP objectives may align with this framework, in particular strengthening the hubs, improving connectivity and facilitating community development. The LDP can indirectly support aims of the policy by, for example, accommodating development for disadvantaged groups, such as the elderly and disabled, with emphasis on 'sustainable growth', facilitating new community facilities and promoting 'shared spaces'. Also relevant to the sustainability topic of sustainable economic growth.
02. Strengthening Society	Northern Ireland Children and Young People's Strategy 2020-2030	NI	2021	NI Executive	The Strategy is a Plan for making life better for all children and young people in Northern Ireland and giving them the best start in life. This means providing good support and services for all children and young people, with extra help for children and young people who need more help or care in their lives. Outcomes include: Children and young people are physically and mentally healthy, Children and young people enjoy play and leisure, Children and young people experience economic and environmental well-being; and Children and young people live in safety and stability.	The LDP can complement many of the aims of this strategy. For example, policies may help with the Strategy's objective to provide all children, including those with a disability and those living in marginalised, vulnerable or disadvantaged situations, with safe, accessible, inclusive spaces for play.
03. Housing	Creating Places: Achieving Quality in Residential Developments incorporating guidance on layout and access	NI	2000	DfI	Aims to promote: More sustainable patterns of living, working and travelling, more effective integration between land-use planning and transport, the creation of attractive places in which people are happy to live, work and take their leisure.	Extant Supplementary Planning Guidance may be relevant to drafting updated policy in the new LDP. The creation of attractive residential environments with a genuine sense of place is a prerequisite to achieving sustainability.
03. Housing	Delivering Sustainable Healthy Homes in Northern Ireland, NIHE, TPCA, Belfast Healthy Cities (March 2016)	NI	2016	NIHE	Guidance and good practice on how planning, health, housing and energy professionals can use new planning powers and responsibilities for community planning to support integrated local approaches to sustainable homes and communities, for energy and health and wellbeing.	This guidance should be taken into account in the preparation of the LDP.
03. Housing	Design and Access Statements - A guide for Northern Ireland	NI	2015	DfI	Planning applications meeting certain criteria must be accompanied by a design and access statement. These include: An application which is a major development, or where any part of the development is in a designated area; and development consisting of – (i) the provision of one or more dwelling houses, or (ii) the provision of a building or buildings where the floor space created by the development is 100m ² or more.	Provides for early consideration of the need for and provision of open space, access and landscaping, and addressing external factors such as noise and traffic safety. Also relevant to the topics of health and well-being and transport and accessibility.
03. Housing	Ending Homelessness Together' Homelessness Strategy for Northern Ireland 2017 - 2022	NI	2017	NIHE	Provides strategic direction for addressing homelessness in Northern Ireland through to March 2022. The Strategy aims to achieve the following five strategic objectives: (1) To prioritise the prevention of homelessness. (2) To secure sustainable accommodation and appropriate support for homeless households. (3) To further understand and address the complexities of chronic homelessness across Northern Ireland. (4) To ensure the right mechanisms are in place to oversee and deliver this strategy. (5) To	In enabling housing need to be addressed, the LDP will contribute to delivery of the objectives of this strategy.

					measure and monitor existing and emerging need to inform the ongoing development of appropriate services.	
03. Housing	Facing the Future: Housing Strategy for Northern Ireland 2012 -2017	NI	2012	DfC	This Housing Strategy identifies four roles for government and five themes to help meet housing needs while supporting the most vulnerable. The themes are: (1) Ensuring access to decent, affordable, sustainable homes across all tenures; (2) Meeting housing needs and supporting the most vulnerable; (3) Housing and Welfare Reform; (4) Driving regeneration & sustaining communities through housing; and (5) Getting the structures right. This strategy sets out how the government intends to fulfil the objectives over the next five years. The strategy also envisages housing playing a role in driving regeneration within communities, particularly those suffering from blight and population decline. 'Facing the Future' was supported by an Action Plan, prepared in 2012 and updated in 2015.	Although now expired, the Housing Strategy along with its Action Plan may inform on unmet housing requirements. These themes align with a number of aspects of the LDP and sustainability appraisal, namely sustainable development, economic development, quality residential environments, etc. The strategy may complement a number of aspects of the proposed LDP, such as the provision of new homes which meets the needs of various groups, such as families, the elderly, and disabled. The strategy may put pressure on the environmental aspects of the LDP such as natural heritage, archaeology, flood risk, etc. A balance will need to be found through considered planning decisions. The LDP can help to support many of the actions identified in the action plan, such as: introducing developer contributions, developing work on energy efficiency, increasing the availability of smaller social housing units and other initiatives for encouraging town and city centre regeneration such as living over shops
03. Housing	Housing Executive Community Involvement Strategy	NI	2018	NIHE	This strategy includes the aims to help deliver the Housing Executive's corporate objective of Building Stronger Communities. It has two specific aims: • Promote Community Involvement across all our communities. • Enabling our communities to challenge, influence and shape our housing service".	The LDP can support this strategy by providing an opportunity to cooperate in place shaping.
03. Housing	Housing Executive Environmental Policy	NI	2015	NIHE	Includes commitments to prevent pollution of air, land and water; support initiatives to develop sustainable local communities; and enhance and protect biodiversity cross all Housing Executive landholdings.	The LDP can help to support these commitments.
03. Housing	NIHE Social housing Development Programme (SHDP) - 2015/16 – 2017/18	NI	2015	NIHE	This strategy sets out how the government intends to fulfil the objectives over the next five years. The strategy also envisages housing playing a fourth role in driving regeneration within communities, particularly those suffering from blight and population decline.	The LDP will take account of ongoing annual reporting and the prospectus will inform social housing zonings within the plan area.
03. Housing	Northern Ireland Empty Homes Strategy and Action Plan 2013 – 2018	NI	2013	DfC	The Empty Homes Strategy is to ensure that the number of empty properties is kept to a minimum and to identify new opportunities to encourage owners to bring them back into use.	Although this strategy has expired and an updated version has not yet been published, the LDP can help to support the objectives of this strategy and its associated action plan.
03. Housing	Northern Ireland Housing Market Areas	Council	2010	NIHE	This report commissioned by NIHE presents the findings of a study into the structure of housing market areas (HMA) across Northern Ireland. A housing market area is defined as a geographical area where most people both live and work and where most people moving home (without changing job) seek a house. HMA can overlap, and often do not marry well with local authority boundaries. Moreover, they are dynamic and HMA boundaries can change over time. 11 major HMAs were identified as operating across Northern Ireland: Belfast, Craigavon, Newry, Ballymena, Coleraine, Derry, Strabane, Omagh, Mid-Ulster, Dungannon and Enniskillen.	Movement patterns to work can help to inform housing need. Reports for each HMA were prepared in 2011-2013 and are available on the home page.
03. Housing	Planning Policy Statement 12 Housing in Settlements	NI	2005	DfI	PPS 12: Housing in Settlements Planning Policy Statement 12 'Housing in Settlements' has been prepared to assist in the implementation of the Regional Development Strategy to guide the	The LDP will take into consideration the policy provisions of those documents retained under the transitional arrangements. PPS policies that have not been consolidated into the SPPS will cease to

					future pattern on housing by managing future housing growth and distribution, support urban renaissance and achieve balanced communities. Development management policy for affordable housing is still contained within Planning Policy Statement 12 'Housing in Settlements' (PPS 12), published in July 2005. Under transitional arrangements, until a Plan Strategy is adopted, PPS 12 is still a material consideration for deciding planning applications. PPS 12 contains a development management policy, Policy HS 2, which "will be applied where a need for social housing is established through a local housing needs assessment and the development plan for the area has not provided for it."	be a material consideration in assessing planning applications for LGDs once each Council adopts their new LDP Plan Strategy. It is therefore necessary that any existing PPS policies the Council wish to continue to apply once the Plan Strategy is in place will need to be replaced through the inclusion of relevant, locally tailored policies within the new Plan Strategy.
03. Housing	Planning Policy Statement 7 (Addendum): Residential Extensions and Alterations	NI	2008	DfI	This document is a further Addendum to PPS 7 'Quality Residential Environments' and must be read in conjunction with the policies contained within that PPS. The Addendum provides an additional planning policy for the extension and/or alteration of a dwellinghouse or flat, including those in multiple occupancy. It embodies the Government's commitment to sustainable development and the Quality Initiative. However, it should be noted that unlike the other policies of PPS 7, the policy contained in this Addendum will apply to all dwellinghouses or flats throughout the Region, including single dwellings in the countryside.	Incorporation of the policies in this PPS will be considered in preparing LDP policies.
03. Housing	Planning Policy Statement 7 (Addendum): Safeguarding the Character of Established Residential Areas	NI	2010	DfI	This document is a second addendum to PPS 7 'Quality Residential Environments' and must be read in conjunction with the policies contained within this PPS and within the previous addendum – 'Residential Extensions and Alterations' (published in March 2008). The addendum provides additional planning policies on the protection of local character, environmental quality and residential amenity within established residential areas, villages and smaller settlements. It also sets out regional policy on the conversion of existing buildings to flats or apartments. In addition, the addendum contains policy to promote greater use of permeable paving within new residential developments to reduce the risk of flooding from surface water run-off.	Incorporation of the policies in this PPS will be considered in preparing LDP policies.
03. Housing	PPS 7: Quality Residential Environments	NI	2001	DfI	This PPS sets out the Department's planning policies for achieving quality in new residential development and advises on the treatment of this issue in development plans with a requirement for a Concept Master Plan for large developments.	This requires that all residential development is of good quality and sustainable and does result in unacceptable damage to the local character, environmental quality or residential amenity of these areas. The process of sustainability appraisal will help ensure this.
03. Housing	Social Housing Development Programme, Unmet Social Housing Need Prospectus	NI	2016	NIHE	The prospectus provides information for housing associations and developers in respect of locations where there is unmet social housing need or shortages of development sites contained in the published SHDP. These are locations where the Housing Executive would consider suitable proposals/schemes.	This assessment informs potential requirements for social housing which can in turn inform the LDP.
03. Housing	The Belfast Metropolitan Housing Market Area: a local housing system analysis	Regional	2011	NIHE	This report commissioned by NIHE presents the findings of a study into the structure of the Belfast Metropolitan HMA. A housing market area is defined as a geographical area where most people both live and work and where most people moving home (without changing job) seek a house. HMAs can overlap, and often do not marry well	Movement patterns to work inform housing need. Over time the Belfast HMA has been extending its influence northwards and southwards into adjacent TTWAs. It now includes all of Larne local government district (LGD), and all but 1 ward of Antrim LGD

					with local authority boundaries. Moreover, they are dynamic and HMA boundaries can change over time.	
03. Housing	Housing Investment Plan 2023-2026	Council	2023	NIHE	Housing Investment Plans (HIPs) are published for each Council. The HIPs are three year plans which reports on progress made over the past twelve months and sets out our ambitions for the coming years. Strategic Priorities include: - We will work with our partners to increase social housing supply to help meet identified need. - We will help NI meet its emissions targets, address the impact of climate change and help sustain and protect our environment for future generations. - We will invest around £1,700m (over the next three years) into our local economy, through our housing services, construction activity, and employment opportunities and through our support for the health, voluntary and community sectors. In the same period we will process circa. £1,148m in Housing Benefit across public and private housing tenures. - We will work with our partners to deliver innovative housing solutions for our customers to help reduce poverty and improve health & well being.	The HIPs are an important evidence base for the LDP and will help facilitate discussion on housing issues within each district. In addition, a purpose of each HIP is to inform Councils on the various programmes and initiatives the Housing Executive and Housing Associations are developing to meet local housing needs. New housing may put pressure on the environmental aspects of the LDP such as natural heritage, archaeology, flood risk, etc. Similarly, the LDP may inhibit house building, due to environmental or design constraints. A balance will need to be found through considered planning decisions.
04. Education and Skills	Development Control Advice Note 13: Crèches, Day Nurseries and Pre-School Play Groups	NI	1993	DfI	The purpose of this Advice Note is to give general guidance to intending developers, their professional advisors and agents. It is designed to provide advice on the Planning criteria to be applied when an application for this form of development is being considered. It is not a specific statement of Departmental policy, but rather one of advice and guidance.	If this is the most up to date advice on this type of development, it should be considered in LDP preparation. However, there may be changes in the sector that also need to be taken into account.
04. Education and Skills	Education Authority Interim Strategic Plan 2017-2027	NI	2018	Education Authority	The interim Strategic Plan 2017-2027 outlines what the EA will do over the next decade to achieve key goals, deliver consistently high-quality services to the community across Northern Ireland and produce positive outcomes for all children and young people. It will be supported by a three-year Corporate Plan and annual business plans which will enable EA to incorporate new priorities and respond to new challenges as they arise. The Strategic Plan has five main objectives (1) Meeting the learning needs of our children and young people (2) Providing excellent education support services (3) Developing all our people to carry out their jobs successfully (4) Managing our resources effectively and efficiently (5) Nurturing leadership across the EA to give clear direction in a dynamic and complex environment.	This plan will be considered in preparing new LDP policies. The LDP should enable development /expansion of education facilities where required.
04. Education and Skills	Every school a good school - a policy for school improvement	NI	2009	DE	Mainly focused on delivery of quality education meeting needs of pupils. Recognises that school premises are a resource that could be better used by local communities and that providing for increased community use of school premises can be an effective way of building links between schools and their local communities. Legislation already provides for schools to make their premises available to outside groups and the Department wants to encourage more community use of school premises. Commits to identifying and disseminating good practice with a particular focus on community	Creates the conditions for increased use of schools for community benefit which should be considered in planning for communities.

					use of schools to help schools in building stronger links with their parents and local communities.	
04. Education and Skills	Schools for the Future: A Policy for Sustainable Schools	NI	2009	DE	The policy has as its vision an estate of educationally sustainable schools planned on an area basis, with focus on sharing and collaboration. It provides a framework for early consideration of emerging problems and possible remedial action to address questions of viability. The primary objective of the policy is to ensure that all children get a first class education in fit for purpose facilities, regardless of background or where they live. The policy sets out six criteria to be considered in assessing a school's educational viability, as follows: quality educational experience; stable enrolment trends; sound financial position; strong leadership and management; accessibility; strong links with the community.	The LDP should enable development/expansion of school facilities where required to meet the needs of the policy.
04. Education and Skills	Planning for Sustainable Provision: Strategic Area Plan 2022-27 Primary and Post-Primary Schools	NI	2022	Education Authority	The Plan's mission is to: • address school provision which is not educationally and/or financially sustainable; • explore realistic, innovative, shared and collaborative solutions with a view to ensuring there is a viable and sustainable level of quality educational provision; • aim to find solutions which deliver sustainable education provision in rural areas; • address issues and challenges specific to local areas, by ensuring there are sufficient places which may result in increasing places in some areas while reducing places in others. • Provide a network of viable and sustainable schools that are of the right type, the right size, located in the right place at the right time with a focus on raising standards.	The LDP can assist in the delivery of some of the Plan's objectives, where new facilities are required.
05. Economy & Employment	Economic Strategy Priorities for sustainable growth and prosperity - Building a better Future	NI	2012	NI Executive	The overarching goal of this Strategy is to improve the economic competitiveness of the Northern Ireland economy. In order to achieve this, we are committed to strengthening our competitiveness through a focus on export led economic growth. This means we are prioritising the need to deepen and diversify our export base in order to increase employment and wealth across Northern Ireland. The key drivers of this will be innovation, R&D and the skills of our workforce.	The LDP can support this strategy by enabling economic growth and shaping an environment with sustainable infrastructure that attracts investment and supports innovation. This Strategy is also relevant to the sustainability theme of education and skills.
05. Economy & Employment	Economy 2030: an Industrial Strategy for Northern Ireland [DRAFT]	NI	2017	DfE	This strategy sets out a plan to turn Northern Ireland into one of the world's most innovative and competitive small advanced economies. Our ambition to build a globally competitive economy will be based around the following five priority pillars for growth: • Accelerating Innovation and Research; • Enhancing Education, Skills and Employability; • Driving Inclusive, Sustainable Growth; • Succeeding in Global Markets; • Building the Best Economic Infrastructure.	The LDP can help support opportunities that are most likely to lead to strong and sustained economic growth
05. Economy & Employment	Going for Growth - A Strategic Action Plan in Support of the Northern Ireland Agri-food Industry	NI	2014	DAERA	In May 2012, DARD and DETI appointed the industry led Agri-Food Strategy Board to make recommendations in respect of the growth targets, strategic priorities and actions to be included in that Plan. The report, 'Going for Growth', includes more than 100 recommendations aimed at accelerating the growth of farming, fishing and food and drink processing in Northern Ireland to 2020	The Plan calls for relevant authorities to streamline planning and IPPC application procedures, to speed up decision-making and to ensure the speed of successful processing of Agri-Food applications is equal to, or better than those in Great Britain. It proposes that greater weight should be applied to Agri-Food applications, reflecting the industry's strategic importance. It also calls for the rapid delivery

					and beyond. In response the NI Executive has agreed an action plan, outlining actions to be progressed across relevant Departments and Agencies. The Plan seeks to deliver "a best in class environmentally sustainable model for production".	of solutions for converting poultry waste to energy, removing a key uncertainty in expansion. However, the facilitation of agricultural expansion will need to be balanced against environmental considerations and cannot override other legislative requirements.
05. Economy & Employment	Northern Ireland Economic Strategy: Priorities for sustainable growth and prosperity. Building a better Future	NI	2012	NI Executive	Sets out how the Executive plans to grow a prosperous local economy over the short, medium and longer term to 2030. The economic vision for 2030 is: 'An economy characterised by a sustainable and growing private sector, where a greater number of firms compete in global markets and there is growing employment and prosperity for all'. There is an emphasis on redressing a dependency on the public sector through the following: stimulate innovation, R&D and creativity so that we widen and deepen our export base; improve the skills and employability of the entire workforce so that people can progress up the skills ladder, thereby delivering higher productivity and increased social inclusion; compete effectively within the global economy and be internationally regarded as a good place to live and do business; encourage business growth and increase the potential of our local companies, including within the social and rural economies; and develop a modern and sustainable economic infrastructure that supports economic growth.	The LDP can support this strategy by enabling economic growth and shaping an environment with sustainable infrastructure that attracts investment and supports innovation.
05	Planning Policy Statement 16 Tourism	NI	2013	DfI	Policies in relation to tourism and safeguarding tourism assets.	Retention of some or all of these policies will be considered in preparing LDP policies.
05. Econ	Planning Policy Statement 4 – Planning and Economic Development (DOE 2010)	NI	2010	DfI	Policies for sustainable economic development and stipulates how these can be brought forward in development plans.	Incorporation of the policies in this PPS will be considered in preparing LDP policies.
05. Economy & Employment	The Destination Strangford Lough Tourism Management Plan 2013 – 2018	Regional	2013	Ards & North Down BC	Strangford Lough is one of the 9 designated destinations within Northern Ireland. Each destination determines its own priorities and projects, in line with the (draft) 2020 Tourism Strategy and Northern Ireland Tourist Board's Tourism Priorities for Growth. Thus Ards Borough Council and Down District Council, working with the tourism trade, can decide what the best offers to visitors are, maximising revenue and opportunity locally, while also contributing to the 2020 targets for NI.	This is a non-statutory plan and has since expired, however the aims of this Plan should be taken into account in LDP preparation. The LDP can help to support the aims of the Plan. In addition to encouraging and supporting tourism and economic development, the Tourism Management Plan also has inter-relationships with the themes of natural resources, water resources, landscape and historic environment and cultural heritage.
05. Economy & Employment	Taste Ards and North Down - Food Destination Development Plan 2023-2027	Council	2023	Ards & North Down BC	At its core, this plan aims is to see Ards and North Down positioned as a premier food and drink destination on the island of Ireland. This with the aim of attracting more visitors to the area, whilst supporting the development of the local food and drink sector from producers to eateries, retailers and markets to distilleries, events and experience providers.	The LDP can support and facilitate farm diversification and provide direction on sustainable development for food tourism and associated hospitality.
06. Material Assets	arc21 Waste Management Plan	Regional	2014	arc21	This Waste Management Plan has been prepared by the arc21 Region in fulfilment of its Councils' obligations under Article 23 of the Waste and Contaminated Land (Northern Ireland) Order 1997. Under Article 23, District Councils have a duty to prepare Waste Management Plans for the forward planning of waste management requirements for collecting, recovering, treating and disposing of controlled waste within the Region. The Plan provides a framework for waste management provision and a regional network of facilities	There is a need to accommodate investment in waste management.

					for all controlled wastes within the arc21 Region. It establishes the overall need for waste management capacity and details the proposed arrangements to deal with the wastes produced in a sustainable manner.	
06. Material Assets	DETI (2010) Energy: A Strategic Framework for Northern Ireland	NI	2010	DfE	Contains goals and targets, but does not include the detail of how targets could be achieved. It does aim to ensure future access to secure, competitively priced and sustainable energy supplies for all of NI. It also provides a direction for NI energy policy over the next ten years concentrating on key areas of electricity, natural gas and renewable energy sources. Under review in 2016.	Renewable and sustainable development policies will indirectly accord with this framework, by providing for renewable development. There may be a conflict between this framework and environmental policies (natural heritage, cultural heritage, flood risk etc.) when it comes to developing gas facilities and electrical networks.
06. Material Assets	DETI (2012) Sustainable Energy Action Plan 2012-2015 and beyond	NI	2012	DfE	The Action Plan aims to assist with the implementation of the Strategic Energy Framework (2010-2020). DETI sets out numerous 'main actions for the future' regarding renewables and other aspects of sustainable energy. Of particular relevance are the commitments to: • Contribute to the growth of the NI sustainable energy sector (through Invest NI) to 8.9% of NI GVA by 2015; • Work with DOE, developers, planners and those responsible for environmental consents to ensure that the need for renewable energy to address the environmental impacts of climate change is recognised, that good quality applications are made and that clear, consistent and proportionate procedures are in place for the consenting of renewable installations; • Undertake "capacity studies" (including landscape capacity study, ecological study and bird migration study, with DOE and others) in order to determine with more accuracy how much development could be accommodated in different locations across Northern Ireland before significant cumulative effects start to emerge; and • Develop a continuous monitoring framework (with DOE and others) where the key potential cumulative effects identified from the assessment are reviewed on a regular basis in response to growth of the onshore wind industry. There are also a number of socio-economic commitments, such as supporting construction of electricity network, or refurbishing schools with renewable technologies.	A number of socio-economic objectives are included in the Action Plan requiring the development of facilities and service infrastructure, as well as proposing funding for additional development such as renewables or farm diversification.
06. Material Assets	Envisioning the Future: Considering Energy in Northern Ireland to 2050	NI	2015	DfE	A vision of what might happen by 2050: the outcomes are neither a prediction nor a plan and the study does not, therefore, propose a strategy. Instead, the vision is intended to guide thinking on what can be achieved in 2050 and what early decisions and activities may be needed to support development towards 2050.	This vision may provide information on anticipated future energy needs and provision and may help to inform policy.
06. Material Assets	National Renewable Energy Action Plan for the United Kingdom	UK	2010	BEIS	Aims to provide a framework which enables the land based and rural sectors to realise the potential opportunities in the development of renewable energy. Focus is on assisting meeting targets for renewable energy production at a regional, national and EU level in a balanced and sustainable way. Other key objectives of the development include energy security, emissions reductions and wider economic advantages.	Policies relating to renewable energy are proposed, helping to meet the objectives of this plan. Design and sustainable development policies should also encourage renewable energy as part of these developments. Planning decisions will have to balance need for renewables with environmental concerns and it may be that the need for renewable developments is outweighed by environmental protection.
06. Mater	Offshore Renewable Energy Strategic Action Plan 2012-2020	NI	2012	DfE	The overall aim of the ORESAP is; to optimise the amount of renewable electricity sustainably generated from offshore wind and marine renewable resources in Northern Ireland's waters in order to	In preparing the LDP the Council will need to align with the regional policy context set out in the SPPS - the need to develop new

					enhance diversity and security of supply, reduce carbon emissions, contribute to the 40% renewable electricity target by 2020 and beyond and develop business and employment opportunities for NI companies. The associated development opportunity is for up to 900 MW of offshore wind and 300 MW from tidal resources in Northern Ireland waters by 2020.	renewable energy sources may need to be balanced against environmental concerns.
06. Material Assets	Planning Policy Statement 10 Telecommunications	NI	2002	DfI	This PPS sets out the Department's planning policies for telecommunications development. It embodies the Government's commitment to facilitate the growth of new and existing telecommunications systems whilst keeping the environmental impact to a minimum. The PPS also addresses health issues associated with telecommunications development.	Incorporation of the policies in this Statement will be considered in preparing LDP policies.
06. Material Assets	Planning Policy Statement 11 Planning and Waste Management (DOE 2002)	NI	2002	DfI	This PPS sets out the Department's planning policies for the development of waste management facilities. It seeks to promote the highest environmental standards in development proposals for waste management facilities and includes guidance on the issues likely to be considered in the determination of planning applications. In addition, it explains the relationship between the planning system and authorities responsible for the regulation and management of waste.	Incorporation of the policies in this Statement will be considered in preparing LDP policies.
06. Material Assets	Planning Policy Statement 18 Renewable Energy (2009)	NI	2009	DfI	Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 18 sets out the planning policy for development that generates energy from renewable resources. The PPS aims to facilitate the siting of renewable energy generating facilities in appropriate locations within the built and natural environments.	Incorporation of the policies in this Statement will be considered in preparing LDP policies.
06. Material Assets	Planning Policy Statement 18 Renewable Energy (2009) Supplementary Planning Guidance Wind Energy Development in Northern Ireland's Landscapes.	NI	2010	DfI	The SPG provides broad, strategic guidance in relation to the visual and landscape impacts of wind energy development. The guidance is based on the sensitivity of Northern Ireland's landscapes to wind energy development and contains an assessment of each of the 130 Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) in Northern Ireland by referencing the characteristics and values associated with each LCA.	This PPS informs the relative capacity for wind energy in respect of landscape. It is therefore also relevant to the sustainability topic of landscape.
06. Material Assets	Renewable Energy in the Land Based Sector A way forward. Interim Renewable Energy Action Plan 2013/14	NI	2013	DAERA	Follow up to the Renewable Energy Action Plan 2010. Strategic aim to Promote sustainable farming and forestry practices to deliver greater resource efficiency and reduced environmental impact, by supporting the sector to make a contribution to and benefit from renewable energy opportunities. Focus on enabling the land based and rural sectors to realise the potential opportunities in the development of renewable energy through capacity building, research and promotion of opportunities.	LDP preparation will have to balance need for renewables with environmental concerns and it may be that the need for renewable developments is outweighed by environmental protection.
06. Material Assets	The Revised Northern Ireland Waste Management Strategy "Delivering Resource Efficiency"	NI	2013	DAERA	The revised Northern Ireland Waste Management Strategy sets the policy framework for the management of waste in Northern Ireland, and contains actions and targets to meet EU Directive requirements and the Department's Programme for Government commitments. It builds on and retains the core principles of the 2006 Strategy, and places a renewed emphasis on the Waste Hierarchy. The new Strategy moves the emphasis of waste management in Northern Ireland from resource management, with landfill diversion as the key	The SPPS supports this strategy, namely with development making sustainable use of available resources and having a sustainable approach to waste designed in. Waste management is one of the Subject Policies. The economic considerations of the SPPS will support 'green jobs' and ensure that the economy will benefit from planning decisions. Improved waste management will be good for the environment. The LDP is therefore likely to support this strategy, namely with development making sustainable use of available

					driver, to resource efficiency i.e. using resources in the most effective way while minimising the impact of their use on the environment.	resources and having a sustainable approach to waste designed in. The economic considerations of the LDP will support employment and ensure that the economy will benefit from planning decisions. Improved waste management will be good for the environment.
06. Material Assets	The UK Renewable Energy Strategy	UK	2009	BEIS	This UK Roadmap shows where we are now; analysis of how deployment may evolve by 2020, together with separate estimates of the market's view of the potential; and the actions required to set us on the path to achieve the deployment levels anticipated in our analysis. While renewable deployment across all technologies will be important, the Roadmap focuses in particular on the technologies that have either the greatest potential to help the UK meet the 2020 target in a cost effective and sustainable way, or offer great potential for the decades that follow. These are Onshore wind, Offshore wind, Marine energy, Biomass electricity, Biomass heat, Ground source and air source heat pumps and Renewable transport.	The LDP should take into account evidence that informs future energy needs and renewable provision.
06. Material Assets	Transmission Development Plan Northern Ireland 2020-2029	NI	2020	SONI	Primary objectives are to: • ensure the development and maintenance of an efficient, co-ordinated and economical system of electricity transmission which has the long-term ability to meet reasonable demands for the transmission of electricity; and • contribute to security of supply through adequate transmission capacity and system reliability; and • facilitate competition in the supply and generation of electricity. To ensure these objectives are met SONI must provide on-going and timely reinforcement of the Northern Ireland transmission network.	Development required to support SONI's objectives may come under the LDP.
06. Material Assets	Energy Strategy - Path to Net Zero Energy - Action Plan	NI	2022	DfE	Outlines a roadmap to 2030 aiming to deliver a 56% reduction in our energy-related emissions, on the pathway to deliver the 2050 vision of net zero carbon and affordable energy.	The Actions set out are generally about improving the energy efficiency of existing buildings, but also about improving the energy efficiency of new buildings and to replace fossil fuels with renewable energy. It also aims to create a flexible, resilient and integrated energy system. The Action Plan may lead to a renewable energy support scheme and will also initiate a review in permitted development legislation for low carbon heat installations; the LDP must ensure that its policies can be applied to existing, new and emerging low carbon technologies, such as hydrogen and biomethane which are potential energy sources identified in the Action Plan. It should align with regional and national policy, such as for proposals requiring consent from more than one authority (e.g. onshore connections for offshore developments).
06. Material Assets	[Draft] Onshore Renewable Electricity Action Plan	NI	2013	DfE	The aim of the Action Plan is to maximise the amount of renewable electricity generated from onshore renewable sources in order to enhance diversity and security of supply, reduce carbon emissions, contribute to the 40% renewable electricity target by 2020 and beyond and develop business and employment opportunities for Northern Ireland companies.	Provision in the LDP to support delivery of this will need to align with the renewable energy subject policy of the SPPS, though it could conflict with the natural heritage and other environmental policies.
06. Material Assets	Transmission Development Plan for Northern Ireland (TDPNI) 2023-2032	NI	2023	SONI	The plan outlines essential upgrades to the electricity grid in Northern Ireland. It will improve reliability and strengthen the electricity network. The upgrades enable us to bring more cleaner, renewable sources of electricity onto the system. Not only will this	Development required to support SONI's objectives may come under the LDP.

					reduce our reliance on fossil fuels, it will also bring down costs for consumers. The plans will also keep us moving towards our climate targets. Our current targets are 80% renewable generation of electricity by 2030 and net zero by 2050. The TDPNI marks a major investment into Northern Ireland's energy network. It proposes several essential upgrades, including: - Modernising parts of the grid in Greater Belfast. The upgrade will mean Belfast's people and businesses have the power they need to grow. - Upgrading the transmission system in County Antrim. This will increase the amount of clean energy we can transport for a cleaner energy future. - Strengthening the grid in the North West and Mid Tyrone areas. A stronger system will support economic development and decarbonisation of our electricity supply. - Bolstering interconnection with GB and ROI. We plan to increase capacity of the Moyle Interconnector and construct a new North South Interconnector.	
07. Physical Resources	Delivering our Future, Valuing our Soils: A Sustainable Agricultural Land Management Strategy for Northern Ireland	NI	2016	independent Expert Working Group on Sustainable Land Management	Improving the health of Northern Ireland's agricultural soils is the central focus of this strategy. Healthier soils will deliver better yields of crops and grass which are higher in quality. This will provide the raw material necessary for the increased productivity and profitability envisaged by 'Going for Growth' and will also deliver environmental improvement simultaneously.	This strategy document is mainly targeted at agricultural practitioners adopting more sustainable land use practices. It contains some information on best practice for sustainable land management which may be translatable to the use of public lands, e.g. blue/green infrastructure and enhancement of biodiversity.
07. Physical Resources	UK Geodiversity Action Plan	UK	2011	Natural England	The UKGAP sets out a framework for geodiversity action across the UK. It encompasses six themes: (1) Furthering our understanding of geodiversity, (2) Influencing planning policy, legislation and development design, (3) Gathering and maintaining information on our geodiversity, (4) Conserving and managing our geodiversity, (5) Inspiring people to value and care for our geodiversity, (6) Sustaining resources for our geodiversity.	Geodiversity can play a role in planning for and mitigating the effects of climate change, coastal erosion and flooding. It can also help support Ecosystem Services such as soil formation, flood management, pollution control, mineral resources and the enjoyment of our environment. The LDP should recognise that geodiversity is cross-cutting across several themes including transport, housing, mineral extraction and waste. It should also recognise the sustainable socio-economic benefits that geodiversity brings for people and the cultural services it provides across a range of sectors and social agenda (for example, contributing to sense of place and a healthy lifestyle). Geodiversity information can help to support the delivery of wider environmental and landscape initiatives (including landscape characterisation and delivery of the European Landscape Convention).
08. Transport & Accessibility	Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan (BMTP)	Regional	2004	DfI	While this implementation plan has expired some of the actions which have not been completed may be relevant in the future. A local transport plan for the Belfast Metropolitan Area (BMA). The Plan takes forward the strategic initiatives of the Regional Transportation Strategy (RTS) for Northern Ireland 2002-2012. The Plan is divided into four themes: provision for walking and cycling, public transport measures, highway measures and management measures. The overall objective is to deliver an integrated transport network.	The BMTP is integrated with the 2015 Development Plan for the Belfast Metropolitan Area (BMAP 2015), with the plans being developed in parallel. The LDP will supersede BMAP 2015 for the part of our Council area to which it applied. Although expired, the BMTP may inform unmet infrastructure requirements in the former BMAP area.

08. Transport & Accessibility	Ensuring a Sustainable Transport Future - A New Approach to Regional Transportation.	NI	2011	DfI	How the Department will develop regional transportation beyond 2015, when the current transport plans reach their conclusion. The new approach to regional transportation complements the Regional Development Strategy and aims to achieve the transportation vision: "to have a modern, sustainable, safe transportation system which benefits society, the economy and the environment and which actively contributes to social inclusion and everyone's quality of life." The new approach starts with the assumption that the decision to travel has been made. It seeks to provide the infrastructure and services that will ensure that travel and transport are as sustainable as possible.	The SPPS includes seven Subject Policies specific to transport and others that address the 'High Level Transport Aims' and 'Strategic Objectives of Ensuring a Sustainable Transport Future', so in meeting the requirements of the SPPS the requirements of this strategy will also be met. Planning to enable people to live and work near the services and facilities they require and policies that allow more people to work from home will support this strategy and the LDP will also need to consider any requirement for new or improved transport infrastructure. The LDP will support this Plan. The need for new or improved infrastructure will need to be assessed against environmental policies, though following good design and sustainable development should achieve the best possible solutions to the need.
08. Transport & Accessibility	Exercise Explore Enjoy: A Strategic Plan for Greenways	NI	2016	DfI	Sets out the plans for a network of greenways, connecting towns and cities to the villages and countryside from east to west and north to south across all eleven Councils. Objectives include: improving health and wellbeing, increasing access to greenways, improving safety, improving social inclusion, economic development.	Greenways can produce both environmental and social benefits, because they are easily accessible and can bring nature and people together. The development of traffic free infrastructure, particularly greenways, can also have a positive impact on social inclusion and encouraging new and harder to reach groups to take up cycling and walking. The LDP can help to support these objectives. This strategic plan is also highly relevant to the sustainability themes of health and wellbeing, natural resources and landscape.
08. Transport & Accessibility	Network Utilisation Strategy, Translink NI Railways, (Published October 2015)	NI	2015	Translink	The Network Utilisation Strategy (NUS) seeks to find a balance between supply and demand. It sets out a long Term vision for rail in Northern Ireland for the next 30 years. It provides the evidence base to support targeted investment in infrastructure, rolling stock and services such that the network is fit for the purpose of supporting the growth of the Northern Ireland economy.	Indicates potential future investment in railway infrastructure.
08. Transport & Accessibility	Northern Ireland Changing Gear: A Bicycle Strategy for Northern Ireland	NI	2015	DfI	The Bicycle Strategy for Northern Ireland is the first step in achieving the Minister's vision for cycling. It aims to set out progressively how we can transform Northern Ireland into a place where travelling by bicycle is a healthy, every day activity. It will be supported by a Bicycle Strategy Delivery Plan which will outline specific time bound actions to realise this vision. It takes a 3 pillar approach: • 'Build' [a comprehensive network for the bicycle], • 'Support' [People who choose to travel by bicycle] and • 'Promote' [The bicycle as a mode of transport for everyday journeys].	This strategy is closely linked with 'Exercise Explore Enjoy: A Strategic Plan for Greenways'. The LDP can help to support the objectives of the strategy by supporting the establishment of new or improved cycle routes and cycling infrastructure.
08. Transport & Accessibility	Planning for the Future of Transport – Time for Change	NI	2021	DfI	Concerns refocusing and reprioritising the aims of the Department for Infrastructure to meet the needs of new and emerging challenges facing our communities. Reprioritisation of our aims and actions is necessary to meet the needs of new and emerging challenges. Climate change is a key and obvious driver for change.	Plan aims to reduce the need to travel and then to change behaviour away from polluting and carbon intensive modes to cleaner and more healthy ways of getting around – the best is walking, wheeling and cycling. LDPs can align with and assist in delivering these objectives.
08. Transport & Accessibility	Planning Policy Statement 13 Transportation and Land Use	NI	2005	DfI	Assists in bringing forward the integration of transportation and land use as per the RDS.	Incorporation of the policies in this PPS will be considered in preparing LDP policies.
08. Transport & Accessibility	Planning Policy Statement 3 – Access, Movement and Parking (2005) & PPS3 clarification (DOE 2006)	NI	2005	DfI	Policies for vehicular and pedestrian access, transport assessments, the protection of transport routes and parking. Provides for a sustainable transport system which promotes road safety.	Incorporation of the policies in this PPS will be considered in preparing LDP policies.

08. Transport & Accessibility	Railway Investment Prioritisation Strategy May 2014	NI	2015	DfI	The Strategy sets out the strategic direction for future railway investment over the next 20 years and the high level initiatives that need to be delivered to support the Strategy. Objectives include: maintain and improve passenger capacity, remove bottlenecks and assist development along TEN-T (Trans European) core network corridor; enhance or extend TEN-T comprehensive network. The Strategy will also look at new halts and opportunities to develop out-of-town rail-based park and ride at new halts.	The LDP can support aspects of the Strategy, such as the aim to build additional park and ride facilities and station upgrades/ refurbishment which include enhancing accessibility and safety features.
08. Transport & Accessibility	Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan 2015	NI	2004	DfI	While this implementation plan has expired, some of the actions which have not been completed may be relevant in the future. The RSTN of Northern Ireland comprises the complete rail network, five Key Transport Corridors (KTCs), four Link Corridors, the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Corridors and the remainder of the trunk road network. The Plan consists of proposals for the maintenance, management and development of this transport network up to the end of 2015.	Although expired, the RTSN may inform unmet transport and infrastructure requirements.
08. Transport	Regional Transportation Strategy (RTS) for Northern Ireland 2002-2012	NI	2002	DfI	The Regional Transport Strategy for Northern Ireland 2002-2012 identifies strategic transportation investment priorities and considers potential funding sources and affordability of planned initiatives over the strategy period.	Although expired, and replaced by 'Ensuring a Sustainable Transport Future', the RTS may inform unmet transport and infrastructure requirements.
08. Transport & Accessibility	Sub-Regional Transport Plan (SRTP)	NI	2007	DfI	While this implementation plan has expired, some of the actions which have not been completed may be relevant in the future. The Sub-Regional Transport Plan deals with the transport needs of the whole of Northern Ireland with the exception of the Belfast Metropolitan Area and the rail and trunk road networks which are covered in earlier transport plans. The purpose of the SRTP is to study the needs of the designated areas in detail and to confirm a package of transport schemes, consistent with the general principles and indicative levels of spend in the RTS. This package of schemes and initiatives must aim to service the future transport demands taking account of financial allocation, planned developments and any changes in Government policy.	Although expired, the STRP may inform unmet transport and infrastructure requirements.
08. Transport & Accessibility	Translink Strategy 'Get on Board' 2016-2021	NI	2016	Translink	Translink's plan to transform public transport and support the growth and prosperity of Northern Ireland. 'Get on Board' has been developed in the context of the Regional Development Strategy 2035 and The New Approach to Regional Transportation. It aims to deliver a transformation in public transport, providing integrated services which connect people, enhance the economy and improve the environment, enabling a thriving Northern Ireland" Incorporates a number of key goals including: • Making services inclusive and accessible to all; • Working with all stakeholders to support social inclusion in local communities; • Support modal shift toward sustainable transport; and • Forging partnerships to deliver cost effective and integrated travel solutions to rural communities.	The LDP will support this strategy and will consider measures to make public transport services and sustainable transport more accessible and more integrated with other transport modes.
09. Air Quality	Defra, Scottish Executive, Welsh Assembly Government and DOE (2007) The Air Quality Strategy for	UK	2007	Four Nations (DAERA)	This updated strategy sets out a way forward for work and planning on air quality issues; sets out the air quality standards and objectives to be achieved; introduces a new policy framework for tackling fine particles and identifies potential new national policy measures which	Local Development Plans can affect air quality in a number of ways, including through what development is proposed and where, and the encouragement given to sustainable transport. Therefore in plan making, it is important to take into account air quality management

	England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland				modelling indicates could give further health benefits and move closer towards meeting the Strategy's objectives. It includes the requirement, under the local air quality management, for every local authority to regularly review and assess air quality in their area which is a statutory requirement under the Environment (Northern Ireland) Order 2002. If national objectives are not met, or at risk of not being met, the local authority concerned must declare an air quality management area and prepare an air quality action plan. This identifies measures that will be introduced in pursuit of the objectives and can have implications for planning.	areas and other areas where there could be specific requirements or limitations on new development because of air quality. Drawing on the review of air quality carried out for the local air quality management regime, the LDP needs to consider the potential cumulative impact of a number of smaller developments on air quality as well as the effect of more substantial developments; the impact of point sources of air pollution (pollution that originates from one place); and ways in which new development would be appropriate in locations where air quality is or likely to be a concern and not give rise to unacceptable risks from pollution.
09. Air Quality	[Draft] Clean Air Strategy for Northern Ireland - A Public Discussion Document	NI	2020	DAERA	This Discussion Document forms part of a two-stage approach to developing the first Clean Air Strategy for Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland has not had its own dedicated Clean Air Strategy before now. There is, however, increasing recognition that exists	The document sets out the challenges faced in NI via emissions from transport, household emissions, agriculture and industry. It aims to deliver on the PfG's Outcome 2: 'We live and work sustainably, protecting the environment'. New policies and programmes should align with the need to protect air quality, and improve it in areas where it is not at an acceptable level.
10. Climate Change	Discussion Paper – Proposals for Taking Forward NI Climate Change Legislation - DOE on 1 December 2015	NI	2015	DAERA	The aim of a NI Climate Change Bill, which is still in development, is to establish a long-term framework for future action on climate change to drive greater efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and so help ensure that Northern Ireland is better prepared to adapt to the impacts of unavoidable climate change. Proposals include: setting a long term target of 80% reduction in GHG emissions by 2050 (compared to 1990 baseline levels); setting interim targets that are consistent with achieving the 2050 targets; placing a duty to set limits in 5-year carbon budgets on the total amounts of GHG emissions that can be emitted in NI.	The application of sustainable development principles and measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions will support this.
10. Climate Change	Efficient Farming Cuts Greenhouse Gases Implementation Plan 2016-2020	NI	2013	DAERA	The plan is focused on encouraging the implementation of a series of on-farm efficiency measures which can improve farm performance and reduce the carbon intensity of local food production. The plan signposts the support available to facilitate this.	Aspects of this implementation plan relevant to planning include the promotion of renewable energy, and certain aspects of farming practice including development for nutrient management (including anaerobic digestion) and energy efficiency.
10. Climate Change	Forests for our Future' programme	NI	2020	DAERA	The 'Forests for our Future' programme pledges to plant 18 million trees (9,000 hectares of new woodland) over 10 years - 10 trees per person in Northern Ireland. The aims are to: • improve the resilience of our forests and woodlands; • Increase their contribution to a sustainable, healthy environment; • Increase their contribution to NI's sustainable economic growth; • Enable more people to improve their health, wellbeing and life chances; and • Contribute to the UK Net Zero by 2050 target.	Existing publicly owned land, including local government land, has the greatest potential for woodland creation in the short term. The LDP can support the objectives of this programme. Also relevant to the sustainability themes of natural resources and economy and employment.
10. Climate Change	Industrial Decarbonisation and Energy Efficiency Roadmaps	UK	2015	BEIS	Reports that set out potential pathways for the eight most heat-intensive industrial sectors to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve energy efficiency. The cross-sectoral report suggests clustering as a long term strategy to deliver energy savings and more efficient use of waste and by-products.	Zoning and enabling infrastructure investments (in roads, ports, pipelines, etc.) would strengthen existing clusters and enable new ones to develop.
10. Climate Change	Northern Ireland Climate Change Adaptation Programme (2019–2024)	NI	2019	DAERA	NICCAP2 contains the response to the risks and opportunities relevant to Northern Ireland, as identified in the UK Climate Change Risk Assessment 2017 and as required by the UK Climate Change Act 2008. NICCAP2 is a continuation of the process of adapting to a changing climate in NI that was commenced by the first NICCAP	NICCAP 2 includes a commitment by local government stakeholders to delivering its outcome objectives by developing local council strategies and activities which will increase the resilience in the built and natural environment, and local communities. Chapter 14 of NICCAP 2 provides a summary of the contributions planned by civil

					2014-19. It incorporates lessons learnt and findings of an end-of-programme evaluation of NICCAP1. The Key Priority Areas are Natural Capital (including Terrestrial Coastal/Marine/Freshwater ecosystems, soils and biodiversity), Infrastructure Services, People and Built Environment, Disruption to Business and Supply Chains, and Flood Security / Global Food Production. A series of seven outcome objectives and visions have been established covering these areas.	society and local government. This includes the action that in bringing forward their Local Development Plans, Councils will take account of climate change adaptation considerations as indicated in the Strategic Planning Policy Statement. The programme also includes a series of steps which a local council could follow to increase their resilience to the impacts of climate area, including the consideration of vulnerability to past weather events and projected climate change. The LDP can take account of these recommendations.
10. Climate Change	Northern Ireland Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Action Plan (revised 2016/17 Mitigation Plan)	NI	2012	DAERA	This document sets out a Cross-Departmental Action Plan to tackle the established strategies together, including how Northern Ireland is and will continue to reduce its carbon footprint. Specifically how the Programme for Government target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 25% below 1990 levels by 2025 will be delivered. Status is not clear as not available on any departmental website. Plan has been updated with a Mitigation Action Plan in 2016/17.	Encouraging sustainable development, good standards of design, renewable energy and overall sustainability will contribute to this action plan. Although an increase in economic development could inhibit a reduction in greenhouse gases, the application of sustainability principles in development will lead to more efficient infrastructure. There is potential scope for the protection of (or increase of) carbon sinks in soil and trees.
10. Climate Change	Paris Agreement Under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change	Inter-national	2015	United Nations	The Paris agreement entered into force in November 2016. It set out to improve upon and replace the Kyoto Protocol, an earlier international treaty designed to curb the release of greenhouse gases. It provides an international framework to hold the increase in global temperature to well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to keep the more stringent target of below 1.5 degrees in sight. The agreement provides a broad framework for countries to work together, share information and build experience to increase the ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and foster climate resilience. It aims to strengthen the ability of countries to deal with the impacts of climate change. To reach these ambitious goals, appropriate financial flows, a new technology framework and an enhanced capacity building framework will be put in place, thus supporting action by developing countries and the most vulnerable countries, in line with their own national objectives. The Paris Agreement requires all Parties to put forward their best efforts through "nationally determined contributions" (NDCs) and to strengthen these efforts in the years ahead. This includes requirements that all Parties report regularly on their emissions and on their implementation efforts.	The application of sustainable development principles and measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions will support this.
10. Climate Change	Reducing Emissions in Northern Ireland	NI	2019	CCC	In this report, the Committee sets out how Northern Ireland can reduce its greenhouse gas emissions between now and 2030 in order to meet UK-wide climate change targets. Overall, Northern Ireland's fair contribution to the UK's fifth carbon budget requires emissions reductions of at least 35% against 1990 levels by 2030.	Delivering emissions can be achieved in a cost-effective way if effective policy is implemented. This will require action across the power, buildings and industry, transport, agriculture and land use, and waste sectors. Suggested policy measures to reduce GHG emissions include promotion of and support for low-cost intermittent renewables and low-carbon heating, tree planting, energy efficiency improvements in homes and transport behavioural change.
10. Climate Change	The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change	Inter-national	1994	United Nations	The UNFCCC entered into force on 21 March 1994 and has near-universal membership. The UNFCCC is a "Rio Convention", one of three adopted at the "Rio Earth Summit" in 1992. Its sister Rio Conventions are the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention to Combat Desertification. It now also incorporates the	The application of sustainable development principles, along with measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, will support the UNFCCC.

					Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. Preventing “dangerous” human interference with the climate system is the ultimate aim of the UNFCCC.	
10. Climate Change	UK Climate Risk: Evidence for the third UK Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA3) Summary for Northern Ireland	NI	2021	CCC	The CCRA is a statutory requirement of the UK Climate Change Act 2008 and is published every 5 years. The objective of the Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA) summary for NI is to inform adaptation policy by assessing the current and future risks and opportunities posed by the impacts of climate for NI to the year 2100, based on the latest understanding of the impacts. The Independent Assessment used to help inform the third UK Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA3) assesses 61 risks and opportunities from climate change to Northern Ireland, including to business, infrastructure, housing, the natural environment, our health and from the impacts of climate change internationally. Risks categorised as “More action needed” and “Further investigation” are more urgent than “Watching brief” and “Sustain current action”. Of these 61 risks and opportunities, more action is needed now to address 31 of them, further investigation is needed for 19, sustaining current adaptation action is only deemed appropriate for five of the risks or opportunities and six have been classified as watching brief. Of the 61, six issues are deemed to be both a risk and opportunity, four of which are associated with the natural environment and each of these require more action or further investigation. There are also eight opportunities that could arise from climate change in Northern Ireland, with four of these also related to the natural environment.	The Strategic Planning Policy Statement states that planning systems should help adapt to climate change through avoiding development in sites vulnerable to climate impacts.. The LDP should take account of the up to date summaries of relevant risks identified as “more action required” in this CCRA and consideration is given to the long term sustainability of development. For new infrastructure, there are opportunities for mainstreaming climate change adaptation into planning and design, to avoid retrofitting later. The CCRA states that effective spatial planning remains the only measure that can avoid flood risk caused by development. This is also relevant to coastal flooding and erosion.
11. Water Resources	Eel management plan: North Eastern River Basin District	Regional	2010	DAERA	Measures to be carried out for the recovery of the stock of European eel including mitigation of hydropower and other barriers to passage.	May inform policies relating to hydropower and in-river works. Also relevant to the theme of sustainable use of natural resources.
	Flood Maps (NI)	NI	2011	DfI	Flood Maps highlights the areas throughout Northern Ireland that are prone to flooding and its potential adverse impacts. The map is designed to: help Rivers Agency and others to plan and manage our work to reduce flood risk; encourage people living and working in areas prone to flooding to find out more and take appropriate action; inform anyone applying for planning permission if flooding is likely to be an important consideration.	Provides information on vulnerability to flooding throughout Northern Ireland which informs constraints on development,
11. Water Resources	Living with Water Programme	Regional	2021	DfI	Following approval by the NI Executive, the Living With Water Programme (LWWP) was set up by DfI in 2015 to develop the Living With Water in Belfast Plan. The aim was to develop an integrated sustainable plan for investment by DfI, NIEA and NI Water to improve the drainage and wastewater infrastructure that serves Greater Belfast to protect against flood risk, improve water quality and provide increased capacity for housing and economic growth. Following endorsement by the NI Executive, it was published in October 2021 and NI Water appointed the teams to design and deliver its major projects, which include the upgrade sewers, wastewater pumping stations, WWTW and sea outfalls.	Discharges from wastewater treatment works (WwTWs) – and combined sewer overflows from the sewerage infrastructure are contributing to high levels of Dissolved Inorganic Nitrogen in Belfast Lough. The high level aim for the LWWP is to develop a strategic drainage infrastructure plan that will manage the flooding risk in Belfast, address the risk of infraction proceedings under the Water Framework and Urban Waste Water Treatment Directives in respect of Belfast Lough, and support economic growth. LDPs must have regard for these issues and planning authorities should work collaboratively with key stakeholders to help address these issues.
11. Water	North Eastern River Basin Management Plan 2015 - 2021	Regional	2015	DAERA	River Basin Management is a key element in implementing the Water Framework Directive (WFD), taking an integrated approach to the protection, improvement and sustainable use of the water	The objectives of this plan will be taken into account in plan preparation so that development does not adversely affect its delivery. The siting and extent of development and measures to

					environment. It applies to groundwater and to all surface water bodies, including rivers, lakes, transitional (estuarine) and coastal waters out to one nautical mile. This plan aims to: Provide at least good status for all water bodies; Prevent deterioration in status; Promote sustainable development; Achieve specific standards for protected areas. The north eastern river basin district (NE RBD) covers an area of around 4,000 km ² , including 1,000km ² of marine waters. It takes in large parts of Counties Antrim and Down and a smaller portion of Londonderry. The principal river systems are the Lagan, Bush and Quoile as well as the smaller systems draining from the glens of Antrim, and the County Down Coastline. The NE RBD has an extensive coastline including Larne, Belfast and Strangford Loughs, with Lough Mourne, Clea Lakes and Silent Valley the main lakes.	prevent pollution can help support delivery of the River Basin Management Plan objectives. Good water quality and aquatic habitats contribute to health and well-being and the economy.
11. Water Resources	Northern Ireland Message on Water	NI	2011	DfI, DAERA	In 2011 the UKCIP (formerly UK Climate Impacts Programme) decided to create a number of messages which could be used to engage with policy makers across the UK. NI Water, NIEA and Rivers Agency worked together to help prepare a headline message for Northern Ireland focused on Water and climate impacts. This describes the potential impacts of climate change on flood risk and stormwater capacity and identifies the need for investment to provide capacity to store and transfer surface water. This includes measures to deal with surface water runoff such as sustainable drainage systems (SuDS). It also considers potential effects on water quality and supply which may require the construction of more impounding reservoirs and raw water transfer pipelines.	Highlights potential long term problems and relating to water supply and flow, including flooding investment needs to mitigate these.
11. Water Resources	Northern Ireland Water PC 21 Business Plan	NI	2021	NI Water	NIW's Business Plan sets out the step change in investment required to address the most critical needs and enable Northern Ireland to thrive from its water and sewerage infrastructure. It identifies 'Economic Constrained Areas' and areas with 'Serious Development Restriction' where development constraints currently exist and identifies the settlements where it is expected that these issues will be addressed through infrastructure improvements during the PC21 period.	The LDP may need to accommodate the development of new or improved water and wastewater infrastructure. Capacity for new development may be constrained by lack of capacity for water supply and wastewater treatment.
11. Water Resources	Our Draft Strategy 2021-2046	NI	2021	NI Water	Provides a longer term view across the next quarter of a century (2021-2046) and updates NI Water's existing long term strategy (2015-2040). Strategic risks posing threats to resilience in maintaining services include climate change, rising customer expectations, changes to legislation and customer demographics.	The LDP can support the Strategy in helping to reduce pollutants entering our waterways and the millions spent on removing them through water treatment; to work with nature rather than against it to support sustainable economic growth; to be ready for more extreme weather conditions and to better design our homes to use less high quality drinking water.
11. Water	Planning Policy Statement 15 (Revised) – Planning and Flood Risk	NI	2014	DfI	Planning policies to minimise and manage flood risk to people, property and the environment.	Incorporation of the policies in this Statement will be considered in preparing LDP policies.
11. Water Resources	Pollution Reduction Programme - Belfast Lough	Regional	2015	DAERA	Pollution Reduction Programmes were established under the Shellfish Waters in order to reduce pollution in designated shellfish waters. As the Shellfish Waters Directive has been repealed and subsumed into the Water Framework Directive, the Programme will be reviewed in 2018, in line with the midterm of the second River	The LDP should consider any designated shellfish waters and actions required for the pollution reduction programme.

					Basin Cycle under the Water Framework Directive (WFD). All Shellfish Water Protected Areas must be managed to ensure that they meet their objectives under the WFD and meet at least Class B status under the EU Hygiene Regulations, whilst making progress towards the WFD guideline standard.	
11. Water Resources	Pollution Reduction Programme - Strangford Lough	Regional	2015	DAERA	Pollution Reduction Programmes were established under the Shellfish Waters in order to reduce pollution in designated shellfish waters. As the Shellfish Waters Directive has been repealed and subsumed into the Water Framework Directive, the Programme will be reviewed in 2018, in line with the midterm of the second River Basin Cycle under the Water Framework Directive (WFD). All Shellfish Water Protected Areas must be managed to ensure that they meet their objectives under the WFD and meet at least Class B status under the EU Hygiene Regulations, whilst making progress towards the WFD guideline standard.	The LDP should consider any designated shellfish waters and actions required for the pollution reduction programme.
11. Water Resources	Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment for NI	NI	2011	DfI	A key objective of the PFRA was to identify areas of potentially significant flood risk for which detailed flood maps would be produced. On the basis of the PFRA, it was determined that detailed flood maps should be produced for 20 Significant Flood Risk Areas and 49 Areas for Further Study and this work was completed as required by the EU Directive in December 2013.	Identifies areas of potentially significant flood risk which informs constraints on development.
11. Water Resources	Reservoirs Act (Northern Ireland) 2015	NI	2015	NI Executive	The Reservoirs Act aims to ensure that reservoirs are managed and operated to minimise any risk of flooding due to an uncontrolled release of water resulting from dam failure and therefore protecting people, the environment, cultural heritage and economic activity. The legislation will apply to reservoirs that are capable of holding 10,000 cubic metres or more of water above the natural level of the surrounding land. These reservoirs will be known as 'controlled reservoirs'.	Reservoirs falling under this Act may require to be identified in the LDP.
11. Water Resources	Sustainable Water - A Long-Term Water Strategy for Northern Ireland (2015-2040)	NI	2016	DfI	The Strategy presents a framework for action which will facilitate implementation of a range of initiatives aimed at delivering the long term vision to have a sustainable water sector in Northern Ireland. The following high level aims have been developed by government to cover the key water needs within a catchment and they form the chapters of the Long-Term Water Strategy: (1) Provide high quality sustainable supplies of drinking water to households, industry and agriculture; (2) Manage flood risk and drainage in a sustainable manner; (3) Achieve the environmental requirements of the Water Framework Directive in a sustainable manner; (4) Provide sustainable reliable water and sewerage services that meet customers' needs. A strategy implementation action plan will now be prepared containing actions aimed at delivering the high level proposed measures in the Strategy.	The strategy will inform the provision of infrastructure for water supply and treatment and future approaches to flood risk management and environmental protection. These elements will all inform the spatial capacity for development. The LDP will need to consider potential future requirements for development of infrastructure, for example by accommodating investment in power, water and sewerage infrastructure in the interests of public health and to support measures relating to flood risk management and environmental protection.
11. Water Resources	Second Cycle Northern Ireland Flood Risk Management Plan 2021-2027	NI	2021	DfI	The Plan focuses on the 12 Areas of Potential Significant Flood Risk (APsFR), and highlights the flood hazards and risks in these areas, with specific measures tailored to manage flood risk in particular locations. The Plan also sets out a series of Regional Measures, which apply across all of Northern Ireland, supporting the	One of the aims of the FRMP is to inform the development planning process to ensure, as far as possible and new zonings within Local Development Plans are located outside flood risk areas. Northern Ireland's planning policies, informed by PPS15 and the SPPS adopt a precautionary approach to development that aims to prevent future

					sustainable management of flood risk for both APSFR and the wider River Basin Districts.	development that may be at risk of flooding or which may increase the risk of flooding elsewhere. It also aims to ensure that any development which is located "by exception" in flood risk areas is appropriately built with flood resistance/resilience measures. In accordance with the Long Term Water Strategy, the FRMP promotes the use of SuDS, as the preferred means of surface water management, for all new developments, where feasible. Council should consider these aims when preparing their LDP.
11. Water Resources	[Draft] 3rd cycle River Basin Management Plan: For the North Western, Neagh Bann and North Eastern River Basin Districts (2021 – 2027) - Consultation	NI	2021	DAERA	When adopted, the RBMP will replace the 3 separate plans from the 2nd cycle. The draft plan provides an update on the health of Northern Ireland's water environment (the status of water bodies), but also sets out our targets (objectives) and actions (programme of measures) on how we want to improve our water environment in the next six years.	Northern Ireland's water resources are managed and protected using a catchment-based approach which includes rivers, lakes and groundwater as well as coastal and transitional water bodies. Land use influences water bodies and their status. The LDP will need to take account of the RBMP and not act contrary to achieving its objectives, where relevant.
12. Natural Resources	All Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021-2025	NI & RoI	2021	National Biodiversity Data Centre	A five-year road map that aims to help bees, other pollinating insects and our wider biodiversity. Aims to bring all stakeholders including farmers, local authorities, schools, gardeners and businesses together to try to create an Ireland where pollinators can survive and thrive.	Councils can play a leading role in implementing the Plan by making their land more pollinator friendly. This Plan contains guidance on what actions Councils can take, of which the most important is "to identify and protect existing areas that are already good for pollinators".
12. Natural Resources	An Invasive Alien Species Strategy for Northern Ireland	NI	2013	DAERA	The aim of the Strategy is to minimise the risk posed, and reduce the negative impacts caused, by invasive alien species in Northern Ireland, increasing awareness and understanding of the risks and issues involved in tackling invasive alien species is a central overarching issue. This Strategy is accompanied by the Northern Ireland Invasive Alien Species Implementation Plan (Revised 2018). It includes the objective to maximise organisational effectiveness and collaboration on invasive alien species issues among Government Departments and Agencies, Local Government, non-governmental organisations, industry and individuals.	Invasive species may be a constraint for some sites. Consideration will need to be given to measures to minimise the risks caused by invasive species.
12. Natural Resources	Forest Service - Down Plan 2015	Regional	2015	DAERA	Forest Management plans set out the management objectives for the forests and woodlands Forest Service looks after. Plans are currently prepared for Down, Armagh, Sperrin, West Tyrone, East Fermanagh and East Tyrone.	Relevant plans may inform land use, landscape and recreational use of forests in the plan area.
12. Natural Resources	North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation (NASCO) Commission Convention For The Conservation Of Salmon In The North Atlantic Ocean	Inter-national	1982	NASCO	Aims to promote the conservation, restoration, enhancement and rational management of salmon stocks in the North Atlantic Ocean through international co-operation.	The LDP will take account of this. DAERA is the lead authority in NI to take this forward and reports annually to the commission as to status of populations and actions taken to maintain and enhance them. Increased fisheries resource will result in increased angling opportunities in the Council area with the economic and social benefits this will bring.
12. Natural Resources	North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation (NASCO) Commission Precautionary Approach Agreement	Inter-national	1982	NASCO	NASCO and its Contracting Parties agree to adopt and apply a Precautionary Approach to the conservation, management and exploitation of salmon in order to protect the resource and preserve the environments in which it lives. Accordingly, NASCO and its Contracting Parties should be more cautious when information is uncertain, unreliable or inadequate. The absence of adequate scientific information should not be used as a reason for postponing or failing to take conservation and management measures.	The LDP will take account of this. Increased fisheries resource will result in increased angling opportunities in the Council area with the economic and social benefits this will bring.

12. Natural Resources	North Down and Ards Area Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2013-2017	Council	2013	Ards & North Down BC	Key Aims of the LBAP include to: • Conserve and enhance the rich biodiversity of the area for both current and future generations • Raise awareness of the variety and importance of biodiversity • Encourage local ownership and stewardship of our biodiversity • Encourage the sustainable use of biodiversity in all new policies and strategies affecting North Down and Ards council areas.	Although this LBAP has expired and an updated version has not yet been published, the LDP may assist with the objectives of the LBAP by affording protection to sites, habitats or species which have been identified as being important. It may also assist in delivering plan objectives by supporting the establishment of urban greenspace and wildlife areas in urban/ industrial/ brownfield sites.
12. Natural Resources	Planning Policy Statement 2 – Planning and Nature Conservation	NI	2013	DfI	Policies for the conservation of natural heritage.	Incorporation of the policies in this PPS will be considered in preparing LDP policies.
12. Natural Resources	Strangford Lough Marine Protected Area Management Scheme (March 2017)	Regional	2017	Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership	The Strategy promotes a strong and diversified economy for rural areas through its Strategic Policy Guidelines, and it is strongly supportive of sustainable, environmentally sensitive tourism as an economic resource. It also recognises the importance of conserving high quality environments such as Strangford Lough. The forthcoming Area Plan will be required to accommodate and to regulate changes in urban and rural environments closely associated with Strangford Lough without adversely affecting the conservation status of the Lough.	This plan will be considered in preparing new LDP policies.
12. Natural Resources	Strategy for Marine Protected Areas in the Northern Ireland Inshore Region	NI	2014	DAERA	Aims to help protect and improve ecosystems in the Northern Ireland inshore region (i.e. within 12 nautical miles) and fulfil international and national legal obligations through a network of Marine Protected Areas (SACs, SPAs, ASSIs, Ramsar sites and Marine Conservation Zones). The Department will develop, in consultation with stakeholders, recommendations for management actions and measures necessary to deliver the conservation objectives for MCZ features.	When carrying out their functions and when permitting others to carry out regulated activities in relation to MCZs, public authorities have a duty to ensure that such activities are undertaken in a way that furthers the conservation objectives of a site, or, where this is not possible, least hinders the achievement of these objectives. This will be taken into account in preparing LDP proposals.
12. Natural Resources	The Fourth Ramsar Strategic Plan for 2016-2024	Inter-national	2016	Ramsar Convention	The Fourth Ramsar Strategic plan lays out a new vision under the Convention mission, with four overall goals and 19 specific targets which are designed to support the efforts of Parties, partners and other stakeholders in preventing, stopping and reversing the global decline of wetlands. The strategic goals are • Addressing the Drivers of Wetland Loss And Degradation; • Effectively Conserving and Managing the Ramsar Site Network; • Wisely Using All Wetlands; and • Enhancing Implementation.	These objectives are reflected in NI strategies and plans.
12. Natural Resources	The Ramsar Convention. The convention of Wetland of International Importance (1971 and amendments)	Inter-national	1971	Ramsar Convention	Seeks to protect and conserve wetlands, particularly those established as a habitat for waterfowl. The Convention uses a broad definition of wetlands which includes all lakes and rivers, underground aquifers, swamps and marshes, wet grasslands, peatlands, estuaries, tidal flats, and all human-made sites such as artificial coastal lagoons.	The LDP must reflect the Ramsar designations, and the need to protect and conserve them. Many Ramsar designated sites are also SACs or SPAs.
12. Natural Resources	Valuing Nature - A Biodiversity Strategy for Northern Ireland to 2020	NI	2015	DAERA	A strategy for Northern Ireland to meet its international obligations and local targets to protect biodiversity and ensure that the environment can continue to support our people and economy. Contains 57 actions to impact positively on the loss of biodiversity up to 2020.	Actions include: Restoring ancient woodland and encouraging peatland and wetland habitat restoration with emphasis on an ecosystems approach. LDP proposals and policies should support delivery of actions, where appropriate.
12. Natural Resources	UN Convention on Biological Diversity (Rio 1992)	Inter-national	1992	United Nations	Led to Convention on Biological Diversity's (CBD's) Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its five strategic goals and 20 'Aichi Targets', published in October 2010; and the EU Biodiversity	The LDP can help to support the delivery of the strategic goals.

					Strategy (EUBS), released in May 2011. Implemented in the UK via the UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework (revised 2018). 20 'Aichi Targets', the strategic goals of which are: Strategic Goal A: Address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss by mainstreaming biodiversity across government and society Strategic Goal B: Reduce the direct pressures on biodiversity and promote sustainable use Strategic Goal C: To improve the status of biodiversity by safeguarding ecosystems, species and genetic diversity Strategic Goal D: Enhance the benefits to all from biodiversity and ecosystem services Strategic Goal E: Enhance implementation through participatory planning, knowledge management and capacity building	
12. Natural Resources	Northern Ireland's Geodiversity Charter 2021-2024	NI	2021	DfE	Guidance document that sets out a clear ambition to recognise geodiversity as a vital and integral part of the economy, environment heritage and future sustainable development. Updates the first Charter published 2017. This is necessary to safeguard and manage geodiversity for both current and future generations.	May inform decision making and support policy at strategic level for the conservation management of geodiversity in terms of physical resources. It may also influence the themes of landscape, natural resources and water resources. The LDP can support the Charter's vision that "geodiversity is recognised as a vital part of our sustainable development, with benefits for the economy, for society and for the environment, and it should be managed appropriately and safeguarded for the benefit of current and future generations of Northern Ireland citizens" and its action that geodiversity should be integrated into policy.
12. Natural Resources	The Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (the Bern Convention)	Inter-national	1979	Council of Europe	The Bern Convention was the first international treaty to protect both species and habitats and to bring countries together to decide how to act on nature conservation. It covers most of the natural heritage of the European continent and extends to some States of Africa. It aims to conserve wild flora and fauna and their natural habitats, as well as to promote European co-operation in this field. The treaty also takes account of the impact that other policies may have on natural heritage and recognises the intrinsic value of wild flora and fauna, which needs to be preserved and passed to future generations.	The LDP can help to support the delivery of the Convention's mission which includes ensuring that wild flora, fauna and habitats are maintained at, or restored to, a favourable conservation status.
12. Natural Resources	[Draft] NI Peatland Strategy 2022-2040 - [Consultation]	NI	2022	DAERA	The vision of this Strategy is to ensure that all semi-natural peatlands are protected, managed and where possible, prioritised for restoration, so that they can maintain their natural functions, biodiversity and ecosystem services. It has 6 objectives: 1) Conserve peatlands & prevent degradation 2) Restoration of degraded areas to functioning peatland ecosystems (designated & non-designated sites) 3) Supporting Sustainable Peatland Management 4) Knowledge Sharing & Research 5) Communication, Education & Access 6) Governance, Implementation & Funding	The LDP can help to support the Strategy's objective to conserve peatland and prevent degradation.
12. Natural Resources	Nature Recovery Plan	NI	TBC	DAERA	Northern Ireland's Nature Recovery Plan, a key component of the Environmental Improvement Plan for Northern Ireland 2024, aims to protect and restore nature by 2030. This plan will include goals to protect 30% of land and sea for nature, increase woodland cover to 9%, and improve water quality.	TBC – further consideration at LPP stage.

12. Natural Resources	[Draft] Ammonia Strategy for Northern Ireland (Consultation)	NI	2023	DAERA	The draft strategy aims to plan the way forward to reduce ammonia emissions from agriculture. The publication of this draft Strategy was followed by a separate Call for Evidence to inform a new operational protocol to assess the impacts of air pollution on the natural environment.	DAERA, in its role as the Statutory Nature Conservation Body, has a duty to provide advice to planning authorities and other competent authorities in relation to the potential impacts of planning proposals on designated sites and protected habitats. In addition, NIEA must also consider the impacts on designated sites from industry, including intensive agricultural activities, before issuing environmental permits for these operations.
12. Natural Resources	Tree and Woodland Strategy 2021-2032	Council	2021	Ards & North Down BC	This Tree & Woodland Strategy recognises the importance of trees, the many benefits they afford us and the increasingly important role they can play in mitigating the effects of climate change. This strategy is required to ensure the Council's limited budget is focused on positive planting programmes and managing tree care and risks. Council is committed to conserving and retaining existing trees and other features where it is considered that they have landscape or amenity value and will use its powers to protect trees where necessary.	The Strategy highlights that one of the Councils' aims in assessing a planning application for development of a site is to ensure that attractive and valuable landscape features, including high quality trees, are retained as part of any development proposal and that sufficient land is made available for new landscaping. During the processing of a planning application for development, the Council will consider the impact of the proposal upon existing trees, on or adjacent to, the development site. This is especially important on land already affected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) or located within a Conservation Area (CA) where there will be a presumption in favour of the retention of trees and their removal may only be considered in exceptional circumstances. At the LPP stage there may be opportunities for synergies with this Strategy when identifying zonings/designations and Key Site Requirements.
13. Landscape	Building on Tradition: A sustainable Design Guide for the NI Countryside	NI	2012	Dfi	Building on Tradition: A Sustainable Design Guide for the Northern Ireland Countryside' provides assistance to all those involved with sustainable development in the Northern Ireland countryside to understand the requirements of PPS21. The guide promotes quality and sustainable building design in Northern Ireland's countryside.	This can be used to inform siting and design standards for development in the countryside to achieve better landscape integration.
13. Landscape	Draft Strangford And Lecale AONB Action Plan 2017 - 2022	Regional	2017	Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership	This Action Plan is part of a suite of documents relating to the Strangford and Lecale AONB including the Strangford and Lecale AONB Management Plan. It identifies which agencies will be responsible for / lead with carrying out actions (grouped under various outcome categories) and timescales for completion. Most of the Actions in this Plan are subject to external funding from a range of sources, and as such their implementation is uncertain.	This is a non-statutory plan, however the aims of this plan should be taken into account in LDP preparation. The LDP can help to support the aims of the plan and there are inter-relationships with the sustainability themes of health and well-being, natural resources and the historic environment and cultural heritage.
13. Landscape	European Landscape Convention (Florence, 2000)	Europe	2000	Council of Europe	The European Landscape Convention of the Council of Europe promotes the protection, management and planning of European landscapes and organises European co-operation on landscape issues. It covers all landscapes, including natural, managed, urban and peri-urban areas, and special, everyday and also degraded landscape. Articles 5 and 6 commit signatory states to a number of actions which include the need to recognise landscapes in law, to establish policies aimed at landscape planning, protection and management and the integration of landscape into other policy areas.	The LDP should support the aims of the convention, seeking to protect, manage and enhance the landscape.
13. Landscape	Northern Ireland Landscape Character Assessment	NI	2000	DAERA	The Northern Ireland Landscape Character Assessment subdivided the countryside into 130 Landscape Character Areas (LCAs), each based upon local patterns of geology, landform, land use, cultural and ecological features. For each LCA, the key characteristics were described and an analysis of landscape condition and its sensitivity	This is not policy but it provides a comprehensive analysis of all of Northern Ireland Landscapes, including their vulnerability and sensitivity to change. These aspects can help inform Councils on the state of the landscape, capacity for development and areas

					to change was made. While the original assessment was published in 2000 many landscape character areas have been updated more recently.	meriting protection. There are linkages with the sustainability topics of natural resources and historic environment and cultural heritage.
13. Landscape	Northern Ireland Regional Landscape Character Assessment	NI	2016	DAERA	The purpose of the Northern Ireland Regional Landscape Character Assessment (NIRLCA) is to provide an evidence base which can be used equally by planners, developers and the public. It describes forces for change through climate change, land use, agriculture, energy and invasive species and outlines the types of ecosystem services provided in each region. The assessment provides a strategic overview of the landscape and subdivides the countryside into 26 Regional Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) based upon information on people and place and the combinations of nature, culture and perception which make each part of Northern Ireland unique. This evidence base can be used to enable informed decisions to be made about the future protection, management and sustainable development of Northern Ireland's landscapes and can be complemented by more detailed local studies.	The RLCA is not policy, but it provides analysis of all of Northern Ireland Landscapes at a regional level which provides further evidence to inform the LDP. It helps to indicate the linkages between the landscape and other assets, such as the historic environment and natural resources. Landscape character assessments and review of these is regarded as being important to inform the understanding of "place" and positive place making.
13. Landscape	Northern Ireland Seascape Character Assessment	NI	2014	DAERA	Twenty-four different regional seascape character areas have been identified round the coast of Northern Ireland. The Seascape Character Assessment describes these areas, their key characteristics and the different influences that mould each as a unique part of the coastline.	This can inform planning of development in the coastal zone. The description and mapping of regional seascape character can provide evidence to assist in responding to the increasing demands being placed upon the related marine and terrestrial environments. This can also help to inform the planning, design and management of a range of projects taking place on and around the coastline.
13. Landscape	Northern Ireland's Landscape Charter	NI	2014	DAERA	Invites organisations and individuals to sign the charter and commit to delivering its vision by approaches including the following: adopt and promote best practice to ensure all development works with and enhances sense of place; ensure sense of place is central to all decision making about landscape and empower people locally to be involved.	This requires consideration of all landscapes to enhance them, respect sense of place and promote sympathetic design.
14. Historic Environment & CH	European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (Valletta, 1992)	Europe	1992	Council of Europe	The new text (revision of the 1969 London Convention) makes the conservation and enhancement of the archaeological heritage one of the goals of urban and regional planning policies. It is concerned in particular with arrangements to be made for co-operation among archaeologists and town and regional planners in order to ensure the conservation and enhancement of the archaeological heritage is one of the goals of urban and regional planning policies. The Convention sets guidelines for the funding of excavation and research work and publication of research findings. It advocates protection of the archaeological heritage, including any physical evidence of the human past that can be investigated archaeologically both on land and underwater and the creation of archaeological reserves and conservation of excavated sites for optimum conservation of archaeological heritage.	Consideration should be given to conservation of archaeological resources including potential archaeological reserves. Article 5 seeks the integrated conservation of archaeological heritage through its consideration in the preparation of Local Development Plans and the creation of planning policies designed to ensure well-balanced strategies for the protection, conservation and enhancement of sites of archaeological interest. It also highlights the need of devising plans to avoid adverse impact.
14. Historic Environment	Faro Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (Faro Convention, 2005)	Europe	2005	Council of Europe	The Faro Convention emphasises the important aspects of heritage as they relate to human rights and democracy. It promotes a wider understanding of heritage and its relationship to communities and society. The Convention encourages us to recognise that objects and places are not, in themselves, what is important about cultural	Member States agree to emphasise the value and potential of cultural heritage wisely used as a resource for sustainable development and quality of life in a constantly evolving society. Examples of specific implications with regard to LDP include Article 5b "enhance the value of the cultural heritage through its

					heritage. They are important because of the meanings and uses that people attach to them and the values they represent.	identification, study, interpretation, protection, conservation and presentation"; Article 5e "Promote cultural heritage protection as a central factor in the mutually supporting objectives of sustainable development, cultural diversity and contemporary creativity"; Article 8d "Promote the objective of quality in contemporary additions to the environment without endangering its cultural values"; and Article 9a "Promote respect for the integrity of the cultural heritage by ensuring that decisions about change include an understanding of the cultural values involved".
14. Historic Environment & CH	Guidance on Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment for the Historic Environment	NI	2018	DfC	Offers advice on historic environment considerations during the Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment process, including examples of the baseline evidence which should be considered through the different stages of screening, scoping, assessment, and reporting. It also provides guidance on the implementation of historic environment legislation, the relevant policy in the Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS) and the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS).	The LDP and the SA of the LDP will take cognisance of this guidance.
14. Historic	Historic Buildings of Local Importance: A guide to their Identification and Protection	NI	2017	DfC	This good practice guide aims to assist Councils achieve a consistent approach when identifying and protecting Historic Buildings of Local Importance.	The LDP may be able to contribute to the protection of unlisted historic buildings of local importance, where appropriate, through policy provisions.
14. Historic Environment & CH	Living Places - An Urban Stewardship and Design Guide for NI	NI	2014	DfI	Aims to establish the key principles behind good place making to inform those involved in the process of managing (stewardship) and making (design) urban places, with a view to raising standards across Northern Ireland. The focus of the guide is urban areas, by which is meant all of our cities, towns, villages and neighbourhoods. It recognises the wider economic, cultural and community benefits of achieving excellence in the stewardship and design of these important places, be they existing or newly proposed.	Principles inform spatial, design and policy measures that can be incorporated in the LDP to maximise contribution to strengthening society, protecting cultural heritage, promoting well-being, enhancing access and creating economic growth.
14. Historic Environment & CH	Planning Policy Statement 23 – Enabling Development	NI	2014	DfI	PPS23 sets out planning policy for assessing proposals for Enabling Development in support of the re-use, restoration or refurbishment of heritage assets such as historic buildings, scheduled monuments, industrial heritage and historic parks, gardens and demesnes. It provides a policy to maintain and enhance the standard of a wide range of community facilities in Northern Ireland including cultural, educational, social, health, built heritage and leisure facilities and the restoration and creation of wildlife habitat.	Incorporation of the policies in this Statement will be considered in preparing LDP policies.
14. Historic	Planning Policy Statement 6 – Planning, Archaeology and Built Heritage (and Addendum ATC)	NI	1999	DfI	This PPS sets out the Department's planning policies for the protection and conservation of archaeological remains and features of the built heritage.	Incorporation of the policies in this Statement will be considered in preparing LDP policies. It should be noted that some of the policy text of PPS 6 has been superseded by policy in the SPPS, for example SPPS para. 6.11.
14. Historic Environment &	Protocol for the Care of the Government Historic Estate Northern Ireland Guidance February 2012	NI	2012	DfC	A document set out by the Executive explaining how departments and agencies will put their commitment into practice for caring and protecting historic estates. Includes protecting heritage assets through regular condition surveys, maintenance and renovation using appropriately experienced practitioners and working to keep buildings in active use.	This document is recommended as good practice for Councils to adopt.

14. Historic Environment	Regeneration: The Value of our Built Heritage. Position Paper 2017	NI	2017	DfC	This paper sets out the potential value of effective architectural regeneration throughout our villages, towns and cities. It highlights Northern Ireland's unique architectural heritage as well as the social and economic value of older building stock, and the added qualities it can bring to our communities.	Paper recommends that heritage buildings are incorporated and made a priority in new Council community planning. The protection and promotion of Heritage should be integrated into community plans and new planning policy. Policy needs to be integrated and support building users.
14. Historic Environment & CH	Rules annexed to the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage (2001)	Inter-national	2001	UNESCO	The Annex to the 2001 Convention contains detailed practical guidelines entitled "Rules concerning activities directed at underwater cultural heritage. They are highly useful and widely recognised and applied by underwater archaeologists. The Rules contain regulations as to: how a project is to be designed; the competence and the qualifications required for persons undertaking interventions; planning the funding of excavation projects; documentation of archaeological excavations under water; and methodologies on conservation and site management.	The Local Plan will recognise the Annex or 'Rules' of the Convention as being 'best practice' for underwater archaeology.
14. Historic Environment & CH	Strangford Lough and Lecale Heritage Management Strategy 2013 -2018	Regional	2013	Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership	The landscape, built heritage and natural environment of Strangford and Lecale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty are fundamental to the well-being and vibrancy of local communities. Our heritage attracts and interests visitors, and generates wealth. For these reasons, as well as for their intrinsic value, we must work together to protect and enhance our heritage, while fostering appropriate human activities and developments.	This is a non-statutory plan, which has not yet been updated since its expiry, however the aims of this plan should be taken into account in LDP preparation. The LDP can help to support the aims of the plan and there are inter-relationships with the sustainability themes of health and well-being, natural resources and the historic environment and cultural heritage.
14. Historic Environment & CH	Study of the economic value of Northern Ireland's historic environment	NI	2012	DfC	The purpose of this study is to help make the case for investment in the Northern Ireland historic environment. The four objectives of the study are to: (1.) Determine the current value of economic activity generated by Northern Ireland's historic environment and its distribution; (2.) Gauge the level of historic environment-related employment in Northern Ireland, including indirect employment, the distribution of this employment, and its relative importance compared with other sectors; (3.) Conduct a credible analysis of the wider community benefits that Northern Ireland's historical environment provides to the economy using a series of case studies, and (4.) Make an assessment of the potential for the use of Northern Ireland's historic environment to aid sustainable growth of the economy and make recommendations as to how this could be realised.	This document can help to inform the LDP and identify areas where links can be made between the Historic Environment and other themes, e.g. community, economic development, tourism, etc.
14. Historic Environment & CH	The Convention concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972)	Inter-national	1972	UNESCO	The most significant feature of the 1972 World Heritage Convention is that it links together in a single document the concepts of nature conservation and the preservation of cultural properties. The Convention recognises the way in which people interact with nature, and the fundamental need to preserve the balance between the two. The programme catalogues, names, and conserves sites of outstanding cultural or natural importance to the common culture and heritage of humanity. To be selected, a World Heritage Site must be an already classified landmark, unique in some respect as a geographically and historically identifiable place having special cultural or physical significance (such as an ancient ruin or historical structure, building, city, complex, desert, forest, island, lake, monument, mountain, or wilderness area). It may signify a	This convention is the mechanism for the identification and establishment of World Heritage Sites. There is currently one WHS in NI. The LDP may recognise sites which are of sufficient national or global importance to merit their inclusion on the Tentative List for World Heritage Sites. The LDP may help support the actions required for sites to receive nomination to the Tentative List by preserving or enhancing their cultural heritage or natural heritage value.

					remarkable accomplishment of humanity, and serve as evidence of our intellectual history on the planet.	
14. Historic Environment & CH	The European Convention on the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe (Granada Convention)	Europe	1985	Council of Europe	The main purpose of the Convention is to reinforce and promote policies for the conservation and enhancement of Europe's heritage. It also affirms the need for European solidarity with regard to heritage conservation and is designed to foster practical co-operation among the Parties. It establishes the principles of "European co-ordination of conservation policies" including consultations regarding the thrust of the policies to be implemented.	Consideration should be given to conservation of architectural resources. Article 5 includes an undertaking to prohibit the removal, in whole or in part, of any protected monument, except where the material safeguarding of such monuments makes removal imperative. Article 10 states that the protection of architectural heritage as an essential town and country planning objective. Planning authorities should ensure that this requirement is taken into account at all stages, both in the drawing up of development plans and in the procedures for authorising work.
14. Historic Environment & CH	UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage (2001)	Inter-national	2001	UNESCO	The Convention sets out basic principles for the protection of underwater cultural heritage. Amongst its main principles are an obligation to preserve underwater cultural heritage, with in situ preservation as first option, and a ban on its inappropriate commercial exploitation. While the UK has not ratified the Convention, it publicly supports the majority of its articles and has publicly recognised the Annex or 'Rules' of the Convention as being 'best practice' for archaeology	The LDP will recognise the Annex or 'Rules' of the Convention as being 'best practice' for underwater archaeology.
14. Historic Environment & CH	Xi'an Declaration On The Conservation Of The Setting Of Heritage Structures, Sites And Areas	Inter-national	2005	ICOMOS	To contribute through legislation, policies, planning processes and management to better protect and conserve the world's heritage structures, sites and areas in their settings.	The LDP can assist with implementing the measures outlined in the agreement: • Acknowledging the contribution of setting to the significance of heritage monuments, sites and areas; • Understanding, documenting and interpreting the settings in diverse contexts; • Developing planning tools and practices to conserve and manage settings; • Monitoring and managing change affecting setting; • Working with local, interdisciplinary and international communities for co-operation and awareness in conserving and managing setting.
14. Historic Environment & CH	Archaeology 2030: A Strategic Approach for Northern Ireland	NI	2021	Archaeology 2030 Programme Board	This project has set out to achieve a ten year vision: Our archaeology is accessed and valued by as many people as possible, led by a sector which is healthy, resilient and connected.	Includes among its recommendations: Guidance relating to development management / planning applications and that current processes and conditions should be reviewed to ensure that delays, costs and uncertainties are minimised and that archaeologists, council planners and developers can work together to make sustainable places where people want to live and work.
14. Historic Environment & CH	Guidance on Setting and the Historic Environment	NI	2018	DfC	The guidance includes a definition of setting, identifies those key aspects of setting which can contribute to the significance of a heritage asset, and outlines a three-stage process for assessing the impacts of change upon setting. It is hoped that the content of this document will assist planning authorities and applicants, heritage consultants and other stakeholders achieve a consistent approach when considering setting and the historic environment in Northern Ireland.	The LDP and the SA of the LDP will take cognisance of this guidance.
14. Historic Environment & CH	Ards and North Down Integrated Arts and Heritage Development Strategy (IAHDS) 2018-2023	Council	2018	Ards & North Down BC	This strategy defines how arts and heritage will help achieve Ards and North Down's cultural, social and economic ambitions by enriching its people and places and empowering its residents to make the most of their creativity.	The LDP can support the strategy's objectives, including: 1. Investment in our heritage assets by Council and other agencies - develop a heritage programme to animate, support and build capacity within the heritage sector and safeguard and develop the heritage assets of Ards and North Down including landscapes, habitats, buildings and monuments.

						2. Spaces for developing creative industries and promoting arts and crafts Explore options to develop flexible spaces in which artists can work, sell arts and crafts products and demonstrate traditional and new skills to ensure greater visibility and higher footfall. 5. Public spaces that build cohesion and support creative expression Continue to invest in the quality and vitality of public realm in towns and villages.
15. Area Plan	Newry Mourne and Down District Council Local Development Plan Preferred Options Paper	Council	2018	Newry, Mourne and Down DC	Consultation paper designed to stimulate debate and encourage feedback on key issues of strategic significance which are likely to influence the direction of the Council's new Local Development Plan. In so doing, it will help to inform the first stage of the Local Development Plan, the Plan Strategy.	The Council may have regard to other plans and topic-based strategies e.g. transport, recreation and economic development, as considered relevant and which may also have cross-boundary implications for its neighbouring Councils. Council should therefore also ensure that its strategy is not in conflict with the Development Plan Documents (DPDs) of neighbouring Councils by assessing any likely cross boundary implications of policies and proposals contained in its DPD to help ensure its compatibility with that of the neighbouring Council and facilitate an integrated and coordinated approach to the implementation of higher-level regional planning aims and objectives.
15. Area Plan	Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council Local Development Plan 2032: Plan Strategy	Council	2023	Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council	The Plan Strategy for Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council is the first document in a two-stage process (the second being the Local Policies Plan). Together these will constitute the Council's new Local Development Plan. The Plan Strategy provides the strategic direction for the Council area over a 15 year period, which will be reviewed following adoption of the Local Policies Plan. The Plan Strategy aims to promote and deliver sustainable development by improving the overall quality of life and wellbeing across the entire Council district up to 2032. The Plan Strategy sets out Strategic Policies underpinned by a suite of Operational Policies which are the means of securing appropriate high quality development that meets the needs of residents and of the Council. The adopted Plan is now being used to assess planning applications.	The Council may have regard to other plans and topic-based strategies e.g. transport, recreation and economic development, as considered relevant and which may also have cross-boundary implications for its neighbouring Councils. Council should therefore also ensure that its strategy is not in conflict with the Development Plan Documents (DPDs) of neighbouring Councils by assessing any likely cross boundary implications of policies and proposals contained in its DPD to help ensure its compatibility with that of the neighbouring Council and facilitate an integrated and coordinated approach to the implementation of higher-level regional planning aims and objectives.
15. Area Plan	Belfast City Council Local Development Plan: Plan Strategy 2035	Council	2023	Belfast City Council	The Plan Strategy, adopted May 2023, sets out the overall aspirations for the future development of Belfast and policies to be used in assessing planning applications.	The Council may have regard to other plans and topic-based strategies e.g. transport, recreation and economic development, as considered relevant and which may also have cross-boundary implications for its neighbouring Councils. Council should therefore also ensure that its strategy is not in conflict with the Development Plan Documents (DPDs) of neighbouring Councils by assessing any likely cross boundary implications of policies and proposals contained in its DPD to help ensure its compatibility with that of the neighbouring Council and facilitate an integrated and coordinated approach to the implementation of higher-level regional planning aims and objectives.
15. Area Plan	Ballyhalbert Village Plan	Local	2016	Ards & North Down BC	The plan seeks to underpin the future sustainable growth of this rural community through a total of 46 proposals identified in collaboration with local residents and community groups. A draft shared vision statement has also been formulated for the village.	This plan will be considered in preparing new LDP policies.

Plans, Policies and Programmes published since 2024

	Title	Spatial Scale	Year	New Lead	Objectives/Requirements	Implications for LDP
000. Other / Cross-cutting	Programme for Government (PfG) 2024-2027 'Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most'	NI	2025	NI Executive	Priorities are: • Grow a Globally Competitive and Sustainable Economy • Deliver More Affordable, Accessible, High-Quality Early Learning and Childcare • Cut Health Waiting Times • Ending Violence Against Women and Girls • Better Support for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs • Provide More Social, Affordable and Sustainable Housing • Safer Communities • Protecting Lough Neagh and the Environment • Reform and Transformation of Public Services	The LDP can help to support the sustainable delivery of Programme objectives, for example: "By investing in water and wastewater, roads and transport, and sporting infrastructure we will encourage businesses to invest, enable house building, and support greater energy efficiency and affordability", "We also need the right infrastructure which will create the foundations for a more productive and prosperous economy; for better rural and urban communities; and for healthier and greener lives", "We will seek to achieve self-sufficiency in our own clean and affordable energy. We have the natural resources including wind, biomethane, and geothermal to break the link with global energy prices, and not only supply our own consumers' energy needs, but also to become a net exporter of renewables", "We will develop an investment plan across the school estate which sets out the changes needed to make sure that all pupils have access to learning environments that are inclusive, safe and able to support pupils of different backgrounds, abilities, and cultures" and "By the end of this mandate, we will have started work on at least 5,850 new build social homes".
05. Economy & Employment	Tourism Vision & Action Plan (10 Year Plan)	NI	2025	DfE	We want to achieve our Strategic Goal of tourism expenditure from overnight visitors exceeding £2 billion by 2035 by growing the sector in a way that supports the Minister's and the Executive's four priorities of Productivity, Regional Balance, Good Jobs and Decarbonisation.	The LDP can help to support the sustainable delivery of new tourism development.
06. Material Assets	[Draft] Offshore Renewable Energy Action Plan (OREAP) for Northern Ireland - Consultation	NI	2025	DfE	The draft Marine Plan and the Energy Strategy support the growth of the low carbon economy in NI. The principles of the draft OREAP include ensuring that this occurs in the most appropriate locations, with co-existence of compatible marine users where possible, and balancing all competing factors in a sustainable, environmentally positive way. Offshore renewable energy development involves several government departments, and multiple stakeholders. Therefore, pivotal to success will be the ability to work collaboratively and to regularly engage with key delivery partners including other government departments, regulators and other relevant bodies, the energy industry, and wider stakeholders who live close to, work in, or otherwise use the marine environment	The LDP should align with regional and national policy, such as for proposals requiring consent from more than one authority (e.g. onshore connections for offshore developments). In preparing the LDP, the Council should take account of the regional policy context set out in the SPPS - the need to develop new renewable energy sources may need to be balanced against environmental concerns.

	Title	Spatial Scale	Year	New Lead	Objectives/Requirements	Implications for LDP
10. Climate Change	Ards and North Down Borough Council Climate Adaptation Plan	Council	2025	Ards & North Down BC	In 2019, Ards and North Down Borough Council declared a Climate Emergency and is committed to making a positive contribution to the fight against climate change. Our Corporate Plan, Towards a Sustainable Borough 2024-2028, has made transitioning to net zero one of our key priorities. Through the development of this Climate Adaptation Plan, we have, across all services, identified our risks and vulnerabilities and have begun to address them. Whether this is altering our mowing practices, planting appropriately, protecting our staff, 'climate proofing' our developments, business continuity planning or retrofitting our buildings, consideration of climate change has been considered and accounted for across the Council.	Recent years have seen an increase in the frequency of more erratic weather events. Both locally and regionally high temperature records are being broken, stronger winds are being recorded, storm events are having a greater impact on all of us and with 115 miles of coastline, we are more exposed than most to rising sea levels. The LDP will work with this Plan to reduce risk and improve resilience to the predicted effects of climate change, for new development.
11. Water Resources	NI Water - Water Resource and Supply Resilience Plan	NI	2025	NI Water	The WR&SR Plan is not only an important document for NI Water but also Northern Ireland plc, as it shows how the company will manage and develop water resources to make sure there is enough water to meet future supply needs. The WR&SR Plan considers population, housing, water usage and incorporates any predicted changes to our climate. This includes highlighting how water supplies would be maintained during critical periods such as severe winters, drought and having a plan for drought.	The LDP may need to accommodate the development of new or improved water supply and storage infrastructure. The LDP will help to inform NI Water where development/growth is anticipated, to allow planning for future changes in supply/demand. The LDP can also support the WR&SR Plan by promoting more efficient use of resources, including water.

Legislation

	Title	Scale	Year	Lead Org	Objectives/Requirements	Implications for LDP
Legislation	Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013	NI	2013	UK Gov.	The Marine Act sets out a new framework for Northern Ireland's seas based on a system of marine planning that will balance conservation, energy and resource needs; improved management for marine nature conservation and the streamlining of marine licensing for some electricity projects. The Marine Act applies to the Northern Ireland inshore region comprising of the territorial sea out to twelve nautical miles. This area includes all the tidal rivers and sea loughs (including Lough Foyle and Carlingford Lough).	Section 58 of the MCAA 2009 and section 8 of the Marine Act (NI) 2013 states that "a public authority must take any authorisation or enforcement decision in accordance with the appropriate marine policy documents, unless relevant considerations indicate otherwise".
Legislation	Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009	UK	2009	UK Gov.	The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 provides the legal mechanism to help ensure clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse oceans and seas by putting in place a new system for improved management and protection of the marine and coastal environment.	Section 58 of the MCAA 2009 and section 8 of the Marine Act (NI) 2013 states that "a public authority must take any authorisation or enforcement decision in accordance with the appropriate marine policy documents, unless relevant considerations indicate otherwise". All construction or deposition works below the Mean High Water Spring Tide (MHWST) mark are subject to licensing under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. Developments in the inter-tidal area may require both planning permission and a marine licence.

Legislation	Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011	NI	2011	NI Executive	Part 2 of the Act details the requirements of Local Development Plans and Section 5 of the Act requires those who exercise any function in relation to Local Development Plans to do so with the objective of furthering sustainable development. Sections 8(6) and 9(7) of the Act requires an appraisal of sustainability to be carried out for the Plan Strategy and Local Policies Plan, respectively.	The LDP will take account of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011. This scoping report forms part of the Sustainability Appraisal process.
Legislation	Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, Equality of opportunity	NI	1998	NI Executive	Section 75 promotes 'equality of opportunity' which means that everyone in society should be able to compete on equal terms. All government departments, agencies and Councils must also give the nine key groups consideration when creating a policy. These are people with different religious belief, people of political opinion, people of different racial groups, people of different ages, people of different marital status, people of different sexual orientation, men and women generally, people with a disability and people without, people with dependants and people without.	The Council is required to ensure that their Local Development Plans are prepared in accordance with Section 75 statutory obligations. Consequently, a Council will have to undertake an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) to determine if there will be any potential impacts upon Section 75 groups as a result of the policies and proposals contained in their Local Development Plans.
Legislation	The Environmental Liability (Prevention and Remediation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009 (as amended)	NI	2009	DAERA	Implements the Environmental Liability Directive in Northern Ireland and introduces financial liability on the 'polluter pays' principle for environmental damage which has significant adverse effects on reaching or maintaining favourable conservation status of species and natural habitats protected under EC legislation; damage that significantly adversely affects the ecological, chemical and/or quantitative status and/or ecological potential of waters falling within the scope of the water framework Directive; land contamination that creates a significant risk of human health being adversely affected as a result of direct or indirect introduction in, on or under land of substances, preparations, organisms and micro-organisms. Note: subject to amendments.	Development arising from the LDP will be subject to these regulations with the operator being responsible for liability, should damage within the terms of these regulations occur.
16. Legislation	Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006	NI	2006	NI Executive	Requires departments and district Councils to exercise their functions in the manner they consider best calculated to promote the achievement of sustainable development.	Implementing sustainability appraisal throughout plan preparation will help achieve this requirement.
16. Legislation (01 Health & Well-being)	The Environmental Noise Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006	NI	2006	NI Executive	Transposes into NI legislation the requirements of the European Noise Directive (END). The three main actions that the END requires of Member States are to: (1) determine the noise exposure of the population through noise mapping (2) make information on environmental noise and its effects available to the public (3) establish Action Plans based on the mapping results. The END requires that noise mapping and action planning be completed every five years. The END also requires Member States to 'preserve environmental noise quality where it is good' through the identification and protection of designated Quiet Areas within agglomerations (urban areas with a minimum population density).	Existing 'quiet areas' must be preserved. Further areas could be identified and designated. Zoning of residential areas should have regard for existing noise generators such as roads, rail, airports and industry.
16. Legislation (01 Health & Well-being)	The Planning (Hazardous Substances) (No.2) Regulations (NI) 2015	NI	2015	DfI	The Regulations transpose Directive 2012/18/EU (The 'Seveso III Directive') on the control of major-accident hazards involving dangerous substances in respect of land-use planning in Northern Ireland.	The LDP must take account of the aims of the Directive in planning policies and decisions, including maintaining appropriate safety distances between major hazard sites (referred to as establishments") and other development and protecting areas of natural sensitivity.

16. Legislation (02 Strengthening Society)	Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016	NI	2016	DAERA	The Act places a duty on public authorities, including district Councils, to have due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans and designing and delivering public services. It also requires public authorities to provide information to DAERA on how they have fulfilled this duty on an annual basis to be published in a monitoring report to be laid before the Assembly.	Rural needs have been fully considered in plan preparation, assessed through the Sustainability Appraisal and appropriate provisions are or will be included in the plan.
16. Legislation (06 Material Assets)	The Waste and Contaminated Land (Northern Ireland) Order 1997	NI	1997	NI Executive	Implements the European Commission (EC) Framework on Waste in NI. The Order makes a number of provisions such as: transfer of responsibility for waste regulation from the district Councils to the Department of Environment (DOE), focused within the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) introduction of measures designed to increase control over the processing and handling of waste including Waste Management Licensing, Duty of Care, Registration of Carriers, Special Waste and Producer Responsibility introduction of measures relating to the identification of contaminated land, designation of special sites, duties of enforcing authorities to require remediation, determination of appropriate persons to bear responsibility for remediation, liability of contaminating substances which escape to other land and contaminated land registers.	The legislation is relevant to LDP through the potential requirements for redevelopment of sites which may have had previous industrial land use and for the identification and development (or redevelopment) of sites for the processing, handling and disposal of waste. The Contaminated Land regime which is set out in Part 3 of the Waste Management and Contaminated Land Order (Northern Ireland) 1997, has been enacted but is not yet in force.
16. Legislation (10 Climate Change)	Climate Change Act 2008	UK	2008	UK Gov.	The Climate Change Act 2008 covers all of the UK, with targets set at the UK level. The Act established a legislative framework to enable the reduction of UK GHG emissions by 34% from 1990 levels by 2020 and 80% by 2050. It also introduced legally binding five-year carbon budgets, which set a ceiling on the levels of GHGs the UK can emit on course to the longer-term target. Climate Change Risk Assessment is a statutory requirement of the Act. While there are no specific targets for NI in the UK Climate Change Act 2008; it is implicit that NI contributes to the UK effort of reducing emissions by at least 80% in 2050 from 1990 levels. In 2019, the UK Government committed to a target amendment of Net Zero emissions by 2050 (amending the 80% target to a 100% reduction). To achieve Net Zero, the UK needs to achieve an average emissions reduction of around 15.5 MtCO ₂ e per year over the 30 years from 2020 onwards, similar to the 16 MtCO ₂ e achieved in 2019.	The achievement of these targets can be supported by the application of sustainable development principles. Supporting and encouraging development which incorporates measures for energy efficiency and which enables reduced consumption of fossil fuels and other resources, alongside other measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, will also assist in achieving targets. The LDP can also have a role in encouraging societal choices that lead to a lower demand for carbon-intensive activities.
16. Legislation (10 Climate Change)	Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022	NI	2022	NI Executive	Imposes a duty on all Northern Ireland departments to ensure that the net Northern Ireland emissions account for the year 2050 is at least 100% lower than the baseline. The Department must set targets for the years 2030 and 2040 that are in line with the target for the year 2050.	Northern Ireland departments are required to develop and publish sectoral plans setting out how sectors will contribute to achieving the targets in the Act. The Sectoral Plans included in the Act are: Sectoral plans for energy, Renewable electricity consumption, Sectoral plans for infrastructure, Sectoral plans for industrial processes, Sectoral plans for waste management, Sectoral plans for agriculture, Sectoral plans for fisheries, Sectoral plans for transport, Active travel. The LDP should aim to support (and not conflict with) objectives identified within the sectoral plans, once they are developed and published.

16. Legislation (11 Water Resources)	Water and Sewerage Services Act (Northern Ireland) 2016	NI	2016	NI Executive	The Water and Sewerage Services Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 confers a power on NI Water to require the construction of sustainable drainage systems as a condition of agreeing to adopt a drain or sewer. The Act also introduces new restrictions to the right to connect surface water sewers to the public sewer network. NI Water is able to take account of upstream sustainable drainage systems and is also able to refuse connection to the public sewer network if other suitable alternative means of dealing with surface water exist or could reasonably be provided. Suitable alternative means of dealing with surface water can include natural features or other arrangements known as soft sustainable drainage systems.	The overall aim of the Act is to make sustainable drainage the preferred option for dealing with surface water in all new developments, where possible. This aim should be reflected in all Local Development Plans.
16. Legislation (11 Water Resources)	The Marine Strategy Regulations 2010	NI	2010	DAERA	The Regulations require the production of a "Marine Strategy" for all UK waters and that the approach is coordinated across all four UK Administrations. It also requires cooperation with other countries sharing our seas. The objective of the UK Marine Strategy reflects the UK's vision of having "clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse oceans and seas". The Marine Strategy Regulations 2010 require action to be taken to achieve or maintain Good Environmental Status (GES) in our seas.	The Strategy applies an ecosystem-based approach to the management of human activities. In doing so, it seeks to keep the collective pressure of human activities within levels compatible with the achievement of GES. Achieving GES will maintain the capacity of marine ecosystems to respond to human-induced changes and enable the sustainable use of marine goods and services by present and future generations.
16. Legislation (11 Water Resources)	Fisheries Act (Northern Ireland) 1966 (as amended)	NI	1966	DAERA	Under the Fisheries Act, DAERA has powers for the supervision and protection of fisheries and for fostering the establishment and development of fisheries. In the the Foyle and Carlingford catchments, the authority is Loughs Agency under the Foyle Fisheries Act 1952 (NI) . The Act encompasses shell-fish (edible aquatic molluscs and crustaceans) which may be subject to aquaculture.	The LDP should aim to support (and not conflict with) the requirements of the Fisheries Act, and any associated Policies and Plans that are derived from the Act.
16. Legislation (12 Natural Resources)	Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Northern Ireland) Order 1995	NI	1985	UK Gov.	Makes provision with respect to nature conservation, enjoyment and conservation of the countryside, and amenity lands. Places particular emphasis on the establishment of a network of Areas of Special Scientific Interest and Nature Reserves. Nature Reserves including (National, Marine and Local Nature Reserves) are declared under this legislation, as well as ASSIs and some AONBs.	The LDP must reflect the existing designations, and the need to protect and conserve them.
16. Legislation (12 Natural Resources)	The Environment (Northern Ireland) Order 2002	NI	2002	UK Gov.	Covers several environmental issues, including pollution prevention control, assessment and management of air quality, and designation of areas of special scientific interest (ASSIs).	The LDP must reflect the ASSI designations, and the need to protect and conserve them. It should also have regard for the need to regulate activities which are capable of causing any environmental pollution.
16. Legislation (12 Natural Resources)	The Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (as amended)	NI	1985	DAERA	This Order prohibits the intentional killing, taking or injuring of certain wild birds and wild animals or the intentional destruction, uprooting or picking of certain wild plants.	The LDP must reflect the legal requirement that if a development site is known or is likely to support a protected plant and animal species, the developer is obliged under legislation not to harm those species.
16. Legislation (12 Natural Resources)	Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended)	NI	1995	DAERA	Sets out legal responsibilities for competent authorities to carry out an assessment under the Habitats Regulations, known as a habitats regulations assessment (HRA), to test if a plan or project proposal could significantly harm the designated features of a European site. As a local planning authority, the Council is a competent authority.	Competent Authorities must undertake Habitats Regulations Assessments (HRAs) to assess the impacts of any plan, project or activity that may affect a European Site prior to approvals or other authorisations being granted. This includes the LDP itself.
16. Legislation (12 Natural Resources)	Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (as amended)	NI	2011	DAERA	The Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (the WANE Act) places a statutory duty on public bodies to conserve biodiversity. Following publication of a revised Biodiversity Strategy in July 2015, the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural	(blank)

					Affairs (DAERA) has decided to publish this guidance document to assist public bodies in fulfilling their biodiversity duty.	
16. Legislation (14 Historic)	Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects (Northern Ireland) Order 1995	NI	1995	DfC HED	Article 3 of this Order provides for the scheduling of monuments for protection. Monuments are selected for scheduling on the basis of published criteria, which are found in Annex B of Planning Policy Statement 6 (PPS 6): Planning, Archaeology and Built Heritage (1999).	There is a requirement for Scheduled Monument Consent for works within Scheduled Monument Areas. This would be a consideration in zoning ground including or immediate to Scheduled Areas.
16. Legislation (14 Historic Environment & CH)	Protection of Military Remains Act 1986	UK	1986	UK Gov.	Under the Protection of Military Remains Act 1986 all aircraft that have crashed whilst in military service are automatically protected. Maritime vessels (e.g. ships and boats) lost during military service are not automatically protected. The MoD can, however, designate wrecks lost within the last 200 years, whose position is known, as 'controlled sites', and can designate named vessels lost on or after 4th August 1914 (Britain's entry into World War I), whose location is unknown, as 'protected places'. It is not necessary to demonstrate the presence of human remains for wrecks to be designated as either 'controlled sites' or 'protected places'. It also covers vessels of a foreign state e.g., German U-Boats	This may apply to military shipwrecks and aircraft discovered in the nearshore area and the larger freshwater lakes of NI.
16. Legislation (14 Historic Environment & CH)	Protection of Wrecks Act 1973	UK	1973	DCMS/DfC	The Protection of Wrecks Act 1973 (c.33) is an Act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom which provides protection for designated shipwrecks. Section 1 of the act provides for wrecks to be designated because of historical, archaeological or artistic value. Section 2 provides for designation of dangerous sites. Wreck sites must have a known location in order to be designated.	Wrecks and wreckage assessed to be of historical, archaeological or artistic importance can be protected by way of site specific designation. It is an offence to carry out certain activities within a defined area surrounding a designated wreck, unless a licence for those activities has been obtained through DfC HED. The Local Development Plan should take into account any current or potential future designated historic shipwrecks.

APPENDIX 5: SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL GUIDE FOR DRAFT PLAN STRATEGY

Key Issues and Appraisal Prompts

1. The objective for sustainable development is to improve health and well-being.
Rationale Public policy seeks to increase healthy life expectancy, reduce preventable deaths, improve mental health and reduce health inequalities. Evidence shows that there is a need to address obesity, increase physical activity and reduce inequalities in health. It is also necessary to provide for the needs of an ageing population and minimize the detrimental impacts of noise. This can be achieved by creating an environment that is clean and attractive; encourages healthy lifestyles; protects tranquil and quiet areas and enables access to health care facilities for all.
Key issues ▪ The population of the Borough is increasing, but the projected rate of increase in Ards and North Down is significantly lower than the rate projected for NI as a whole. Current projections show a declining population from 2032. ▪ Population trends indicate an ageing population in the Borough. There will be an increasing need to create accessible means for older people to engage in physical activity to prolong their healthy lives. ▪ Up to a fifth of people in the Borough never spend leisure time outdoors. However, a greater proportion than the NI average enjoys leisure time outdoors at least once a week. ▪ Participation rates in physical activity are higher than the NI average, however they are significantly lower than recommended minimum levels. ▪ There is a need to promote and incentivise regular participation in physical activity and time outdoors through provision of and ensuring good accessibility to sports facilities, open space, play areas, green infrastructure and walking and cycling routes. ▪ The Borough has an accessible natural environment, particularly to the coast and sea, with numerous open spaces, walking and cycling trails. Baseline information, recorded for BMAP, however points to a deficit of open space, sport and outdoor recreation provision. ▪ Less than half of children in NI walk or cycle to school. ▪ There is a particular need for children to have accessible play in places where they feel safe. ▪ Development should be sited and designed to connect with public open space, walking and cycling routes and other recreational facilities where possible. ▪ Around one in five children and three in five adults in the Borough are either overweight or obese. Obesity in children has a higher incidence in the most deprived areas. Diet and a relatively inactive lifestyle are contributory factors. ▪ Mental health indicators on average are better than the NI average, but there is evidence of poorer mental health in the most deprived parts of the Borough. ▪ Noise and environmental quality are not identified as posing significant adverse effects at present, however they can impact on health and therefore environmental quality should be improved, or sustained where it is good, to minimise adverse health impacts.

- Conor Park/Stricklands Glen Bangor West is a designated 'Quiet Area', which should be considered in planning new development.
- Road safety for all users should be a key consideration of planning and design.
- The location of and access to emergency services can impact on response times. Rural areas require accessibility to general practice and non-emergency healthcare services.
- In general, when compared to the overall population of NI, measures of health are better in the Borough across most of the indicators used for measuring population health. There are however inequalities in health and well-being, with most measures of health and life expectancy being significantly worse in the most deprived areas.
- Good spatial planning can reduce health inequalities by providing a high standard of design and place making, open space, capacity for any additional services required and accessibility.
- There is a need to plan the relative location of industry and housing, open space and public facilities to minimise use conflicts.
- There are small parts of the Borough such as the southern Ards Peninsula where there is a moderate probability of the incidence of Radon at actionable levels.

Appraisal Prompts

Positive Effects	Negative Effects
a) Provides opportunities for and encourage healthy lifestyles and physical activity for all ages b) Increases social contact and intergenerational contact (including family cohesion and care) c) Creates or increases access to open space with public access d) Improve ability to reach schools and workplaces by active travel e) Improves access to health care f) Provide suitable accommodation for those with long term health problems or disability g) Avoids or reduces air quality / noise impacts that may affect health h) Reduces the risk of traffic accidents i) Reduce response times for the emergency services	j) Discourages healthy lifestyles and physical activity k) Decreases social contact and intergenerational contact l) Reduces or impedes access to open space with public access m) Make it harder to reach schools and workplaces via active travel n) Reduces access to health care o) Shortage of suitable accommodation for those with long term health problems or disability p) Increases air quality / noise impacts that may affect health q) Increases the risk of traffic accidents r) Increase response times for the emergency services

2. The objective for sustainable development is to strengthen society	
Rationale	
Regional policy is directed towards improving community relations and creating a safe society which is more united. Success will be represented by places which are inclusive, respect culture and identity, promote social integration and create a sense of pride. They will also be designed to feel safe and to reduce opportunity for crime or anti-social behaviour.	
Key issues	
80% of our residents live in the northern 25% of the Borough and the remaining population is quite dispersed with a quarter of the population in rural areas. This can result in some individuals and communities experiencing rural isolation. Population trends indicate an ageing population in the Borough. Design should seek to be inclusive and meet the needs of all potential users. - The community is less ethnically diverse than NI as a whole, however the needs of minority groups should be taken into account. - There is a need to promote social inclusion through appropriate and accessible shared space and applying place making to make areas inclusive for all backgrounds, abilities and income levels. - There is a commitment to promote social inclusion through quality shared and neutral space throughout the whole of the Borough where everyone feels welcome. - There will continue to be a need for childcare facilities and facilities for older people, as well as access to community and leisure facilities. - Fear of crime affects the quality of life of a significant proportion of residents. Planning has a role to play in future design and creating attractive, welcoming and safe places. - Local representatives and groups can help to identify the needs and experience of different parts of our society which can be recognised through Community Planning. The LDP can help to deliver measures identified through Community Planning. - Levels of deprivation vary widely across the Borough. Multiple issues of deprivation are present in many areas.	
Appraisal Prompts	
Positive Effects	Negative Effects
a) Promote inclusion of all groups b) Retain, create, or enhance shared space c) Increase accessibility to shared space d) Promote positive social interaction e) Give rural communities appropriate access to facilities and services f) Reduce the factors causing inequalities g) Meet identified needs that will reduce inequalities experienced by the most deprived communities h) Supports draft Marine Plan objective to promote development of vibrant, accessible and sustainable coastal communities.	i) Inhibit inclusion of all groups j) Shared space reduced or deteriorates k) Decrease accessibility to shared space l) Decrease positive social interaction m) Rural communities less access to facilities and services n) Exacerbate the factors causing inequalities o) Maintains or increases inequalities experienced by the most deprived communities p) Conflicts with the objectives of the Marine Plan in respect of promoting vibrant, accessible and sustainable coastal communities.

3. The objective for sustainable development is to provide good quality, sustainable housing.	
Rationale	
There is ongoing need for new housing in locations that meet regional policy, are accessible and balance the needs of society and the environment. The make-up of households is changing therefore design needs to meet long term requirements with good quality build to be sustainable. This objective should reduce homelessness and ensure decent, affordable homes with a mix of types.	
Key issues	
▪ The increasingly ageing population, combined with decreasing average household sizes may increase demand for smaller housing units. ▪ Increasing demand for smaller accommodation could lead to lack of supply and make smaller accommodation less affordable. ▪ Regional policy targets 60% of housing to be provided on brownfield sites in settlements with a population of 5,000 or more. ▪ Some sites zoned for housing within the Borough have had zero development, identifying why land has gone undeveloped may be necessary when considering future land zoning. ▪ The declining rural population and increased pressure for housing in urban areas could increase the rural isolation felt by some communities. ▪ Affordable housing is required for a variety of housing types and sizes. Housing need is greatest in the settlements of Bangor, Newtownards, Holywood and Comber, however a substantial proportion of waiting list applicants are in rural areas. ▪ In recent years, affordable housing need in Ards and North Down has been delivered by housing associations on Housing Executive land. Increasingly, areas of housing need are emerging in locations where the Housing Executive does not own land. ▪ Lack of land availability in areas of high demand could lead to unaffordability in some areas. ▪ Demand for affordable housing that is not available could lead to increased demand in the private rented sector which could lead to affordability issues. ▪ 20% of households within Ards and North Down experience fuel poverty. New housing should be low carbon and energy efficient to help reduce the problems of fuel poverty. ▪ Areas of deprivation in terms of living environment were identified in MDMNI 2017. ▪	
Appraisal Prompts	
Positive Effects	Negative Effects
a) Enable/encourage a variety of household types and size b) Enable/encourage affordable housing c) Help to reduce homelessness d) Meet the needs of specific groups e.g. single people, couples, retired people, disabled e) Provide housing which meets locally identified needs f) Reduce the number of unfit homes g) Help to fill any vacant dwellings	h) Inhibits a variety of housing types i) Does not promote affordable housing j) May increase homelessness k) Does not meet the needs of specific groups e.g. single people, couples, retired people, disabled l) Housing provision does not meet local needs m) Doesn't help to reduce number of unfit homes or use vacant dwellings

4. The objective for sustainable development is to enable access to high quality education	
Rationale	
Good education improves opportunities for employment and also contributes to the avoidance of poverty and healthier lifestyles. The provision of suitable accommodation for educational establishments in appropriate, accessible locations should play a part in making them more sustainable and reducing inequalities in education.	
Key issues	
▪ A declining birth rate has contributed to a number of primary and post-primary schools facing sustainability challenges. ▪ The level of provision of primary and post-primary school places is expected to meet current and projected demand. ▪ Despite the declining birth rate, there is projected growth in the need for special school places and a potential need for additional specialist accommodation. ▪ Although the Borough has, in general, a high level of educational achievement in comparison to the NI average, achievement is not consistent across the Borough. In some areas, more than 40% of working age adults have no qualifications, or low levels of qualification. ▪ To respond to changing opportunities in the context of COVID-19 and the UK exit from the EU, there is a need to upskill / reskill people in employment and to support people that are unemployed, underemployed or economically inactive to upskill / reskill. ▪ Apprenticeships and higher-level apprenticeship should be promoted and supported as alternative pathways for employment. ▪ Digital literacy, connectivity and access to broadband are important for developing/enhancing skills and reducing inequalities.	
Appraisal Prompts	
Positive Effects	Negative Effects
a) Improve education level and employability of the population b) Promote access to education c) Promote access to skills training d) Help rural communities access education and skills training e) Improve opportunities for multiple use of facilities f) Help educational establishments to provide modern sustainable accommodation	g) Does not help improve education level and employability of the population h) Decrease access to education and skills training i) Makes rural communities access education and skills training harder j) Under use of public facilities k) Inhibit provision of suitable educational facilities

5. The objective for sustainable development is to enable sustainable economic growth.

Rationale

Regional policy seeks to develop a strong, competitive and regionally balanced economy. It is necessary to provide suitable and sustainable locations for employment, with flexibility where necessary, to reflect current and future distribution of jobs across sectors, encourage new business start-ups, facilitate innovation, regenerate areas, attract investment and make employment as accessible as possible for all. This will reduce unemployment and poverty by helping more people to earn a living and increase their income.

Key issues

- Identifying and zoning appropriate land for development is a vital part of creating the right conditions to create and sustain economic activity that meets local employment needs whilst considering opportunities for regeneration.
- In selecting land for development, it is important to provide sites with quality environments that are readily accessible to the key transport corridors.
- Proposed new employment locations should be readily accessible by active travel and/or public transport.
- National and regional trends indicate an ongoing shift towards tertiary sector jobs. The Council and relevant statutory bodies should work with local providers of education and training to identify and address any local skills shortfalls and develop tailored learning to ensure its population has the skills and training to meet future demand.
- NI has seen a decrease in primary sector and manufacturing jobs in recent decades. However there are a number of successful strong manufacturing and agri-food businesses in the Council area which should be supported and growth in these areas encouraged.
- There is a need to ensure that the Borough is attractive to investors and higher skilled people.
- There is a need to support and enhance the diversity, vibrancy and vitality of town centres and the wider area, particularly in respect of effects initiated by the Covid-19 pandemic. This approach is needed to also attract investment and higher skilled people to the Borough.
- Commercial fishing landings at Portavogie harbour are an important contributor to the local economy, however significant commercial fish landings also occur at Bangor and Portaferry.
- Bangor Marina is the largest marina in NI and is renowned for its excellent facilities. Maritime tourism can provide strong economic benefits and other marinas in the Borough may have scope for attracting more visitors. The redevelopment of Bangor Waterfront is the Council's flagship project under the Belfast Region City Deal.
- Major opportunity exists for the expansion of the tourism industry across the Council area to attract investment, jobs and visitors. The film and television production industry has helped to promote locations as places to visit and tourism priorities may be interlinked with regeneration and development, but may also place pressure on rural areas.
- The benefits of tourist attractions to the night-time economy should be recognised both in social and economic terms.

- Food Destination tourism has been identified in the Tourism Strategy as a key opportunity, as the Borough is a source of high quality agricultural produce and seafood.
- The Borough has a unique coastline. A joined up approach with neighbouring Council areas in establishing and promoting linked trails and experiences could bring added benefits.
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Appraisal Prompts

Positive Effects	Negative Effects
a) Support innovation and competitiveness within the local economy b) Ensure sufficient land supply in appropriate locations for economic growth c) Support creation of a range of job types that are accessible, especially to areas of deprivation. d) Support enhancement of the skills base. e) Help make the Council area a more attractive place to live, work, visit and invest f) Make the best use of location g) Ensure the vitality and vibrancy of town centres can be improved h) Increase the number of people coming to the Borough to work i) Maximise economic benefits of sustainable tourism j) Effects are spread throughout the year k) Promotes marine resource/supports marine interests	l) Does not promote innovation and competitiveness within the local economy m) Does not support land in appropriate locations for economic growth n) Does not support creation of a range of job types that are accessible, especially to areas of deprivation. o) Does not support enhancement of the skills base. p) Does not help make the Council area a more attractive place to live, work, visit and invest q) Does not make the best use of location along major transport corridors. r) Vitality and vibrancy of town centres may deteriorate. s) Does not increase the number of people coming to the Borough to work t) Does not enable use of tourism assets. u) Effects are seasonal /restricted to certain months v) Conflicts with marine resource/inhibits marine interests

6. The objective for sustainable development is to manage material assets sustainably.**Rationale**

Material assets such as infrastructure and sources of energy production are essential for society and the economy but need careful planning to ensure that they are designed for efficiency and to minimize adverse impacts. The concept of the circular economy treats waste as resource which should be managed sustainably to reduce production and increase recovery, recycling and composting rates; new or adapted facilities may be required.

Key issues

- Improving infrastructure across rural areas for the needs of rural communities, rural services and rural businesses is vital to support rural enterprise and economic activity.
- Renewable energy applications have substantially decreased since 2015. There is currently an absence of financial incentives for renewable projects and this may be influencing rates of development.
- Onshore wind has dominated renewable energy generation, but a diversity of technologies will be needed for a sustainable energy mix, e.g. solar, tidal, biomass, hydroelectric, anaerobic digestion.
- Support for enabling renewables and diversification within the market is required to help meet commitments of the Climate Change Act.
- Grid reinforcement is required to facilitate the growth of renewable energy generation.
- It is important to support wind and other renewable energy, but this should be balanced with safeguarding areas of particular scenic/environmental value.
- The marine area has potential to support wave/tidal energy projects, however land-based infrastructure will be required to connect offshore development to the transmission network.
- The capacity and availability of infrastructure in respect of water, waste and sewage is key in identifying the location of future housing and employment land.
- Growing a circular economy and implementing the waste hierarchy that advocates prevention, and reuse of waste before recycling are key elements within DAERA's draft Green Growth and draft Environment Strategies.
- The impact of existing or proposed waste management facilities should be considered when zoning land for development.
- A spatial approach to the provision of waste management facilities based upon the proximity principle is recommended to minimise the environmental impact and cost of waste transport.
- Derelict/contaminated land sites may be available for appropriate reuse, but it is important that any risks associated with contamination are considered and addressed as part of the planning and redevelopment process.

Appraisal Prompts

Positive Effects	Negative Effects
a) enables efficient delivery of infrastructure/services b) Sufficient telecommunications can be provided or are feasible c) Electrical infrastructure is fit for purpose d) Enables renewable energy production/connections	k) Challenging / inefficient to deliver infrastructure and services l) Existing telecommunications poor or unlikely to become available m) Adequate electrical infrastructure unavailable or unfeasible n) Halts or inhibits development of renewables or marine energy resources.

e) Supports development of renewables including marine energy resources. f) Increases reusing/recycling/composting rates g) Makes reusing/recycling/composting easier h) Reduces waste production per household i) Uses/encourages the proximity principle for location of material assets j) Reduces the amount of derelict/contaminated land	o) Unlikely to improve recycling rates or make recycling easier p) Does not adopt the proximity principle for location of material assets q) Doesn't take advantage of derelict/contaminated land
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7. The objective for sustainable development is to protect physical resources and use sustainably.	
Rationale	
Land, minerals and soil are resources which require protection from degradation and safeguarding for future use. Sustainable agriculture, sustainable tourism and sustainable use of minerals and geothermal energy can help to support the economy.	
Key issues	
- Minerals, including valuable minerals, are an important natural resource and their responsible exploitation is supported by Government. The minerals industry makes an essential contribution to the Northern Ireland economy and to quality of life, providing primary minerals for construction and as a valued provider of jobs and employment, particularly in rural areas. - In comparison with other Councils, Ards and North Down has low quantities of mineral extraction. However, materials that are extracted are in high demand for road construction. - There are limited supplies of sand and gravel within the Borough area and imports from other Council areas in NI will be required to meet local demand for housing and other planned development. - While ACMD protect valuable and vulnerable landscapes/seascapes and environments, they can also restrict economic development. - Available, workable mineral resources which are of economic or conservation value should be safeguarded and not be allowed to become constrained by other forms of development. - The Borough has two areas of former mining activity and one has potential for development as a destination. - Land within the vicinity of former mine workings may be at risk of instability and subsidence. - Land surrounding former mine workings may have contaminated land issues. - The ROMPS may provide an opportunity to improve operating and environmental standards within the quarrying industry. - The Mourne Gullion Strangford UNESCO Global Geopark, ratified in 2023, includes part of the Strangford and Lecale AONB, which also extends into the Borough. There may be opportunities for partnership working with NMDDC for sustainable growth of the Geopark and responsible tourism, conservation, and education which recognises the connections between geological heritage and the broader spectrum of the area's natural, cultural, and intangible heritage. - High quality agricultural land is a valuable and finite resource. Within the Plan area, there are areas of agricultural land comprising some of the best and most versatile in NI. - Soil quality across the Council should be protected using effective conservation measures, due to a lack of specific legislation protecting soils at a regional or local level.	
Appraisal Prompts	
Positive Effects	Negative Effects
a) Avoids/minimises loss of greenfield sites b) Maintains or enhances soil quality/avoids soil erosion c) Earth science features can be protected	j) Increases loss of greenfield sites k) Does not maintain/enhance soil quality/soil erosion likely

d) Enables the minerals industry to operate sustainably e) Enables materials to be locally sourced f) Considers minerals across Council boundaries g) Enable future use/benefit of quarries h) Enables potential future use of geothermal energy i) Potential for sub-surface planning	l) Earth science features unlikely to be protected m) Reduces the ability for minerals industry to operate sustainably n) Considers minerals only within the Council area o) Does not protect potential future use/benefit of quarries p) Inhibits the future use of geothermal energy q) Sub-surface planning unlikely due to geology
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8. The objective for sustainable development is to encourage active and sustainable travel.

Rationale

There is a common goal to reduce traffic emissions and congestion, which means reducing single-occupancy car use and increasing use of other forms of transport, especially at peak times. The location of housing and key services can facilitate better access to public transport. Opportunities for active travel make travel more affordable and may bring added health benefits, while also reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Measures to manage car demand, such as parking and re-allocation of road space, which encourage a shift from car to public transport, walking and cycling will contribute to this goal.

Key issues

- There is a need to reduce pollutant emissions from the transport sector and this could be partly achieved through the planning of transport routes that enable shorter journeys and the integration of public transport and active travel options.
- Reliance on the car is high, but a significant number of households do not have access to a private vehicle and are reliant upon public transport, taxis or walking and cycling.
- Although there are bus and rail services in the Borough, the number of people using public transport or active travel to get to work or school is below the NI average.
- For journeys to work of less than 2km, the car is the dominant mode of transport. Measures are needed to help encourage active travel or more sustainable modes of transport and to reduce reliance on the car.
- There is an opportunity to apply spatial planning to help enable people to live more sustainable lifestyles through a choice of transport options.
- Measures are needed to help futureproof the Borough's transport routes toward a more sustainable future – integration of active travel routes and park and ride/share facilities.
- There is expected to be an increase in electric vehicles and demand for vehicle charging facilities across the Council area.
- Measures may be needed that focus on the issues faced by people living in the rural areas and more remote parts of the Borough.
- The Portaferry to Strangford ferry service cuts down an alternative road journey by 46-miles.
- There is potential for new greenway routes to be developed and existing routes to be extended with multiple benefits for health and well-being, the local environment and the local economy.
- Additional financial support for community and public transport is likely to be a future consideration.
- There is potential to connect existing walking and cycling routes together, as well as across Council boundaries, whilst enhancing accessibility with new local level routes.
- Planning to connect active travel routes across Council boundaries presents an opportunity to help support local level economic initiatives.
- Pedestrian access in town centres has improved, but the road networks still take priority which may have potential negative impacts in the long term and may decrease air quality.

- There is potential to improve local level active travel routes in the Ards Peninsula to improve people's access to facilities, services and the outdoors in partnership with the Peninsula Healthy Living Partnership.

Appraisal Prompts

Positive Effects	Negative Effects
a) Will help reduce traffic congestion b) Encourage modal shift to active travel and/or public transport c) Improve access to and efficiency of public transport d) Will benefit those without access to a vehicle e) Retain, create, or enhance walking or cycling routes	f) Unlikely to reduce traffic congestion g) Does not promote modal shift to active travel and/or public transport h) Unlikely to improve access to and efficiency of public transport i) Unlikely to benefit those without access to a vehicle j) Does not retain, create, or enhance walking or cycling routes

9. The objective for sustainable development is to improve air quality.

Rationale

Air pollution has serious impacts on human health as well as degrading the natural environment. This objective can be achieved through reducing sources of air pollution. Where air pollution cannot be totally excluded careful siting of development should avoid impacts on sensitive receptors.

Key issues

- Air quality in the Borough is generally good. There are no air quality management areas.
- There are smoke control areas in some parts of the Borough where authorised fuels must be used.
- The A2 is an area of concern for air quality because of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and particulate matter (PM₁₀) emissions from road transport.
- Maintaining local air quality should be a consideration when zoning land for potential use or development so that inappropriate adjacent land uses are avoided.
- There will be a need to increase the number of electric vehicle charging points across the Borough and particularly in the Ards Peninsula.
- Measures to encourage people to use more sustainable transport options will be needed to help reduce reliance on cars and reduce transport emissions.
- Ammonia is emitted from agricultural practices and in NI it has been identified as one of the main air pollutants because of the significant contribution that the agricultural sector makes to the regional economy. There is a need to reduce ammonia emissions from the agricultural sector.
- Support for appropriate renewables will help further reduce reliance on traditional energy sources that cause air pollution,
- Air pollutants can be linked to respiratory illnesses in NI, however the Borough is below the NI average for deaths related to respiratory illnesses.

Appraisal Prompts

Positive Effects	Negative Effects
a) Will help achieve AQMA objectives b) Likely to improve air quality c) Able to reduce traffic congestion d) Will encourage other modes of transport to the car e) Promotes/supports/enables projects/behaviour that will improve air quality f) Able to avoid/reduce air pollution g) Will avoid increase of ammonia emissions (near to sensitive receptors)	h) Unlikely to help meet AQMA objectives i) Unlikely to improve air quality j) Unlikely to reduce traffic congestion k) Maintains/increases car use l) Inhibits/stops projects/behaviour that will improve air quality m) Likely to increase air pollution n) Likely to increase ammonia emissions (near to sensitive receptors)

10. The objective for sustainable development is to reduce causes of and adapt to climate change.
Rationale
International commitments require greenhouse gas emissions to be reduced to decrease their effects on climate. Measures that help reduce energy consumption and enable renewable energy help mitigate greenhouse gas emissions, however, climate change adaptation planning and implementation is essential to managing the resilience of our society and natural environment to an uncertain future, as well as for the known current and projected impacts of a changing climate.
Key issues
▪ CO2 accounts for the largest proportion of total GHG emissions in NI. The LDP should support a low-carbon future in anticipation of new energy and climate change policies, as well as evolving and emerging energy technologies, including planning for electric charge up points. ▪ The LDP should promote and support the reuse and retrofit of existing buildings as a sustainable approach in the context of carbon cost and should encourage the integration of measures to enable adaptation to the effects of climate change into new development. ▪ There is an opportunity to plan for and adapt for climate change by promoting and incorporating measures such as green/blue infrastructure, sustainable drainage systems and other measures that increase resilience. ▪ There is an opportunity to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by spatially influencing new and existing development so that journey times are reduced, connectivity improved and appropriate sources of renewable energy are available. ▪ Measures are needed to help people, organisations and nature to cope with the predicted impacts of climate change – flooding, coastal change (including coastal erosion), habitat loss, water pollution (urban, rural and marine) - from run off, higher temperatures and extreme weather events. ▪ The agricultural sector is a significant contributor to GHG emissions and opportunities to reduce emissions within the scope of the LDP need to be considered. ▪ There is a need to encourage and increase opportunities for active and sustainable travel modes across the Borough, to help reduce reliance on the car and to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the transport sector. ▪ Natural gas has superseded oil as the most common fuel used for central heating in the Borough. The incorporation of suitable low carbon energy resources for heating homes and businesses, including geothermal energy, should be encouraged. ▪ It is likely that sea level rise, coastal erosion and storm surges will become significant problems for the Borough Council to manage. ▪ There is a higher than average reusing/recycling/composting rate for the Borough Council relative to other Councils. The waste management hierarchy and the proximity principle should continue to be used to guide waste management facilities and practices based on the principles of sustainable development. ▪ The absence of a consistent and comprehensive coastal erosion baseline data in Northern Ireland means that it is difficult to identify areas that are at risk. Once suitable evidence is available, Coastal Change Management Areas could be identified (by the relevant authority) and policy established in those areas to inform on the likely sustainability of any proposed development and to help manage coastal change over time.

- It is important to protect habitats, coastal areas, floodplains and peatlands, which act as natural adaptation measures for climate change, as well as providing habitat for local biodiversity.
- Ensuring buffer zones exist around designated sites and priority habitats should help enable movement of species due to a changing climate.
- A cross-sectoral approach involving various stakeholders will be needed to further develop and deliver Climate Change Action Plans.

Appraisal Prompts

Positive Effects	Negative Effects
a) Will reduce greenhouse gas emissions b) Likely to reduce energy consumption c) Likely to reduce the need to travel by vehicle d) Increases/supports/promotes/enables renewable energy e) Enables/promotes public transport, walking/cycling. f) Helps reduce consumption/waste production and increases recycling g) Protects floodplains h) Protects peatlands and other natural assets such as beaches and dunes that act as attenuation features. i) Incorporates measures to adapt to climate change j) Reduces the risk of damage to property from storm events, including through coastal erosion.	k) Likely to increase greenhouse gas emissions l) Unlikely to reduce energy consumption m) Unlikely to reduce vehicle use n) Restricts/inhibits/detracts from renewable energy o) Maintains reliance on vehicles and discourages public transport, walking/cycling. p) Encourages consumption and increases waste levels q) Removes/damages/reduces the extent or holding capacity of floodplains r) Removes/damages/reduces peatlands and other natural assets such as beaches and dunes that act as attenuation features. s) Does not consider adaptation for climate change t) Does not reduce the risk of damage to property from storm events, including through coastal erosion.

11. The objective for sustainable development is to protect, manage and use water resources sustainably.

Rationale

This objective encompasses reducing levels of water pollution, sustainable use of water resources, improving the physical state of the water environment and reducing the risk of flooding, now and in the future. It meets the requirements of Northern Ireland legislation, strategies and plans in support of the water environment (under the Water Framework Directive Regulations) and other legislation that relates to water and it takes account of the future impacts of climate change.

Key issues

- Development may lead to contaminated runoff which may increase pollution of fluvial and coastal waterbodies and the marine area.
- Other wastes may also cause surface or groundwater pollution at the point where they are used or disposed of, e.g. wastes from livestock production, food processing or primary treatment such as sewage or anaerobic digesters.
- River water quality in the Borough is significantly lower than the NI average and no surface water catchments or groundwater bodies have achieved 'good' ecological status. There is a need to improve the water quality of all river waterbodies to achieve 'good' status (or better).
- Water quality in Belfast Lough and Strangford Lough is not achieving 'good' status and not all shellfish areas are meeting the guideline standards for microbiological and other contaminants. There is a need to reduce pollutants and contaminants entering the marine area.
- Bathing water quality is good / excellent at four out of six of the Council's bathing beaches. Water quality in designated bathing waters should be sustained or improved.
- Plan proposals should be compatible with DfI's Flood Risk Management Plan. Bangor is identified as an area of Potentially Significant Flood Risk. Other settlements may have localised areas at risk of flooding.
- Development may lead to changes in the rate of surface water runoff, or the capacity of a receiving watercourse may be altered which in turn has the potential to increase flood risk.
- It is predicted that the risk and extent of flooding, particularly coastal flooding, will be increased by climate change.
- Development should be planned to avoid areas at significant risk from flooding, now or in the future, or where development may increase the flood risk elsewhere.
- Constructed flood alleviation and defence measures are expensive and can alter the natural morphology of riverbanks and coastlines. Where possible, they should be avoided.
- There are benefits in retaining and restoring natural flood plains and watercourses as a form of flood alleviation - this can support River Basin Management Plan objectives.
- Sustainable drainage (SuDS) measures could be incorporated and maintained in new development and redevelopment or regeneration schemes. 'Above ground' SuDS measures for source control can deliver wider ecosystem service benefits.
- Development in general requires a water supply, and can therefore increase demand for water sources, treatment and distribution infrastructure. This can be offset by measures to make more efficient use of water.

- Developments without access to mains sewers can incorporate sewage treatment on site. However, it is important that there is capacity for safe disposal of treated discharges and for maintenance of the treatment system to ensure that it remains effective in the long term.
- NI Water has identified wastewater treatment works and wastewater network capacity constraints in several areas within the Borough. These may influence the potential for development in some settlements, or parts of settlements.

Appraisal Prompts

Positive Effects	Negative Effects
a) Improve the quality of surface and groundwater, and coastal and marine waters, to meet objectives. b) Lead to more efficient use of water c) Minimise risks from flooding (now and in the future) d) Avoid the need for flood defence e) Protect or enhance floodplains f) Maintain water flows for good ecological quality g) Protect aquatic food resources	h) Reduce quality of surface and groundwater, and coastal and marine waters and fail to meet objectives i) Lead to waste of water j) Increase risks from flooding (now or in the future) k) Risk creating a need for flood defence l) Reduce the extent or holding capacity of floodplains m) Water flows/temperature not suitable for good ecological quality. n) Unsustainable impacts on aquatic food resources

12. The objective for sustainable development is to protect natural resources and enhance biodiversity.

Rationale

International obligations which are adopted in Northern Ireland legislation, along with national legislation and policies require the conservation of biodiversity including flora, fauna and habitats. This is for their intrinsic value, and for the wider services that they provide to people, the economy and the environment, for example as carbon stores which can mitigate the effects of climate change. This objective includes protecting and enhancing biodiversity, including in coastal and marine areas, as well as protection of green and blue infrastructure to enhance the services that natural resources provide.

Key issues

- The Borough has 115 miles of coastline, which receives protection due to its environmental importance and multiple benefits for the environment, the economy, and peoples' health and well-being.
- Most of the Borough's settlements are located along the Borough's coast.
- Strangford Lough is a valuable and unique natural resource within the Borough's jurisdiction. It is protected by several designations to ensure its integrity is conserved, protected and enhanced.
- The Borough has a hierarchy of designated sites to protect its natural heritage resource. These designations range from International and European through to National level and include marine designations in the adjacent marine area. Local level sites are also identified in extant Area plans.
- There may be potential for new local level nature conservation sites in the south of the Borough and along the Ards Peninsula, as well as opportunities to add to the total number or quality of local level sites across the area.
- Ancient woodland sites, native/semi-natural woodlands, and woodland cover are of particular importance in the Borough because of their conservation value.
- A new Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) and a Biodiversity Officer are available within the Borough Council area. These resources will help guide local level biodiversity conservation projects and enable partnership working across communities.
- The Council can play an important role in biodiversity by leading by example and providing local level spaces for projects.
- There is a statutory requirement of the Council to further the conservation of biodiversity in its functions.
- Development pressure and inappropriate land use must be managed near all designated sites but also any priority habitat. This is particularly important in and around Strangford Lough and the rest of the coastline, as it is a valuable natural resource providing ecosystem services.
- There is a need for the Council to define the 'coastal zone' to help enable management of it.
- There is potential for additional green and blue infrastructure across the Borough, with opportunities for multifunctional benefits i.e. local biodiversity gain, active travel route provision, access to amenity value, and strengthened natural capital able to reduce flood risk.
- The coastline and areas of the Borough are already recognised for their ecosystem services value – fisheries, crops, culture, tourism, health and amenity. New

opportunities for projects could help raise awareness of the physical and economic importance of the natural environment.

- The Borough has an important amount of access to canoe trails in and around Strangford Lough and the Outer Ards coastline.
- Unregulated activities that affect Strangford Lough may need to be appropriately addressed under provisions in the Marine Act (NI) 2013.
- The inter-relationship between onshore and offshore activities needs to be appropriately considered.
- Marine planning and its associated obligations need to be appropriately considered within the Local Development Plan, particularly as previous plans and frameworks may not have referred to coastal or marine matters.
- There is a need to identify stakeholders to engage with on shared coastal and designated site issues, and any other potential projects that are likely to require a holistic approach. Examples of stakeholders include Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, Belfast City Council, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council, and the National Trust.
- The National Trust has identified coastal change hotspots at Mount Stewart and Kearney.
- More sustainable defence and protection measures need to be considered as alternative approaches to coastal realignment, rather than the traditional practice of hard sea defences.
- Futureproof the Council by advocating a precautionary approach to coastal development and coastal defence by researching erosion and flooding issues to improve coastal knowledge and lead zoning areas of constraint.

Appraisal Prompts

Positive Effects	Negative Effects
a) Protects and/or enhances designated sites and their buffers b) Protects and/or enhances local biodiversity c) Protects/enhances/incorporates green and blue infrastructure d) Supports/provides ecosystem services e) Provides positive environmental benefits f) Supports the preservation and enhancement of marine ecosystems and marine protected areas	g) Unlikely to protect or enhance designated sites or their buffers h) Unlikely to protect or enhance local biodiversity i) Removes/damages/excludes green and blue infrastructure j) Negatively impacts on ecosystem services k) Enables negative environmental impacts l) May adversely affect marine ecosystems and marine protected areas

13. The objective for sustainable development is to maintain and enhance landscape character.
Rationale
International and national policies seek to conserve the natural character and landscape of the coast and countryside and protect them from excessive, inappropriate or obtrusive development. This objective seeks to maintain the character and distinctiveness of the area's landscapes and seascapes, and to protect and enhance open spaces and the setting of prominent features, settlements and transport corridors.
Key issues
▪ There are a variety of landscape and seascape types across the Borough that range from farmland to rocky shores and coastline, and wooded estates to urban centres. Landscape in the Borough includes 1 AONB, 10 Landscape Character Areas, 4 Regional Landscape Character Areas, 7 Seascape Character Areas - including 2 offshore, and 101 Local Landscape Policy Areas. All these landscape types have their own individual pressures. ▪ The Borough has 1 AONB – the Strangford and Lecale AONB. The AONB is designated as some of the most important landscape in NI and covers a significant proportion of the Borough. It is shared with neighbouring Council areas which requires partnership working when considering projects or plans that may impact upon the AONB. The AONB Management Plan serves as a collaborative framework for all stakeholders involved. ▪ Working with landowners and voluntary organisations including community groups is likely to become even more important to help ensure sustainable landscape and seascape management into the future. ▪ A variety of measures may be needed to help protect the different landscapes and seascapes from visual intrusion caused by new development pressure linked to energy, minerals, housing and business/ industry. For example, of the ten Landscape Character Areas, nine have been identified with a high sensitivity to wind energy. There are likely to be constraints on certain developments in some areas. ▪ The Borough has 115 miles of coastline which contribute significantly to its character. With much of the coastline included within the AONB designation and contributing to various landscape and seascape character areas, protection of the seascape resource must be given careful consideration when considering projects or plans that may impact upon it. ▪ The Borough's landscape and seascape quality is regionally important for tourism and is attractive to investors for housing, recreation and commercial / business development. ▪ Some parts of the Borough have been affected by development that has detracted from local rural character, individual landscape settings, and neglected boundaries. This highlights how landscape protection requires appropriate consideration of local landscape and seascape quality and incorporation of appropriate design, as well as continuous and active landscape management. ▪ It is important to protect, conserve and enhance landscape character, even when areas may have been degraded. Strategic and local level approaches to landscape protection are required. ▪ Ecosystem services are likely to become more of a consideration in landscape related decisions since their inclusion in the NIRLCA 2015.

- There are 101 LLPAs but there may be sites of a similar significance across the wider countryside and particularly in the rural Ards Peninsula that cannot fall under the LLPA designation.
- Sustainable landscape management is likely to require new working partnerships as many of the LCAs are shared with the neighbouring Councils of Newry, Mourne and Down; Belfast City, and Lisburn and Castlereagh City.

Appraisal Prompts

Positive Effects	Negative Effects
a) Continue to protect areas designated for landscape b) Minimise any visual intrusion c) Protect and/or enhance the setting of prominent features, settlements and transport corridors d) Avoid major impacts on coastal views and seascapes e) Sensitively integrate new development to protect and enhance local distinctiveness f) Able to appropriately consider any impacts on neighbouring landscape designations including AONBs	g) Negatively impact on areas designated for landscape h) Increase any visual intrusion i) Detract from the setting of prominent features, settlements and transport corridors j) Negatively impact on coastal views and seascapes k) New development not integrated to enhance local distinctiveness l) Unable to consider relevant landscape related management plans or landscape designations

14. The objective for sustainable development is to protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment and cultural heritage.

Rationale

The historic environment and cultural heritage are resources that inform our history and bring character and sense of place. They also attract visitors and contribute to the economy and bring vibrancy to the places where we live, work and relax. This can be achieved by protecting and enhancing Conservation Areas, townscapes and other sites of historic and cultural value including their setting, and by promoting the sustainable re-use of historic buildings.

Key issues

- The Historic Environment and Cultural Heritage plays a role in maintaining and enhancing the sense of place in our settlements and rural locations which can be supported by building design recognising historic environment evidence in both urban and rural locations.
- The Borough contains centres, villages and towns which each have a unique sense of place, and character. Protecting this individual sense of place aspect has benefits for people and their pride in their community.
- Heritage assets are at risk from vacancy, neglect, decay, and development pressures. The innovative and conservation-led reuse of existing historic building stock should be promoted.
- The Borough's rich cultural and heritage assets can contribute to a high-quality built environment that helps to create attractive places for living, investing in and visiting. The vitality of historic town centres can be supported and enhanced by heritage-led development.
- There is recognition of the economic role of the historic environment in heritage-based tourism and promoting awareness, involvement and understanding of the historic environment. The additional attraction it has played in providing authentic and attractive locations for film and television production should be protected and expanded on.
- Certain types of permitted development may have effects on the historic environment.
- 'Buildings at Risk' should continue to be identified and efforts made by the relevant authority to maintain their regular use and/or support their restoration.
- The Borough has a rich archaeological heritage. This could be further explored and conserved through identifying new Areas of Archaeological Potential. Below ground archaeological heritage can be vulnerable to permanent destruction through new development and there may be requirements to preserve archaeological remains in situ.
- The setting and landscape of ASAs and any potential new ASAs should be preserved.
- Undesignated marine Heritage Assets such as Shipwrecks and Submerged Landscape Sites, whilst not statutorily protected, must be given appropriate evaluation and consideration.
- The Borough has a rich industrial heritage through cereals milling and flax production, along with its 18th and 19th Century transport engineering.
- Regionally important historic buildings, such as Mount Stewart, are set in a natural environment. The natural and historic environments can add value to each other.

- Encouraging and nurturing traditional skills and using the historic environment as an educational resource.
- Appreciating the value of built heritage should also apply to new buildings.
- There is ongoing loss of certain non-designated heritage assets such as historic farmsteads and buildings in the countryside, industrial and defence heritage, and historic shopfronts in some towns and settlements. Non-designated buildings which are of heritage or architectural importance in the context of overall landscape, townscape or heritage value should be recognised for their role in conserving these settings.
- There may be opportunities to maintain or reflect historic routeways and townland boundaries.
- Traffic pollution, poor air quality and noise pollution may adversely affect the historic environment.
- Heritage assets may be at risk from effects of climate change, including flooding, drying out, or coastal erosion.

Appraisal Prompts

Positive Effects	Negative Effects
a) Protect and conserve built and cultural heritage, (including marine related heritage) b) Enhance built and cultural heritage c) Allow 'sense of place' to be conserved in townscape and rural settings and protect local distinctiveness d) Allow archaeological features to be assessed, recorded and preserved e) Preserve and enhance the setting of cultural heritage assets f) Support access to, interpretation of and understanding of the historic environment g) Enable assessment of impacts of development on complex and extensive archaeological sites adjacent to settlements h) Provide opportunities for cultural activities	i) Loss of built and cultural heritage (including marine related heritage) j) Neglect of built and cultural heritage k) Lose 'sense of place' in townscape and rural settings and reduce local distinctiveness. l) Archaeological features not assessed, recorded and preserved m) Damage the setting of cultural heritage assets n) Reduce access to, interpretation of and understanding of the historic environment o) Impacts of development on complex and extensive archaeological sites adjacent to settlements not understood p) Decrease opportunities for cultural activities

Approaches to mitigate negative effects and promote positive effects

These are potential approaches that could be applied to mitigate negative effects and/or promote the positive effects of the preferred option.

1. Accessibility analysis for services, facilities, employment
2. Accessibility analysis open space including play facilities
3. Developer contributions
4. Housing needs analysis
5. Energy assessment for new build
6. Building design guides
7. Zoning land for stated purpose/s
8. Zoning land relative to another land use (e.g. housing relative to employment)
9. Masterplan for area
10. Partnership working
11. Site design guide
12. Key Site Requirements
13. Policy (specify on what)
14. Economic impact analysis
15. Restrict range of developments
16. Require transport analysis
17. Requirement for public transport provision
18. Requirement for e-car charge points
19. Requirement for car share locations
20. Planning conditions
21. Site selection criteria
22. Identify sites to protect from development
23. Landscape analysis
24. Require landscaping plan
25. Policy to protect sensitive landscape features
26. Require flood risk assessment
27. Require contaminated land assessment
28. Water pollution prevention local policy guidelines
29. Require use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)
30. Policy to protect important buildings
31. Policy to limit noise in proximity to sensitive receptors
32. Policy to limit odour/air pollution in proximity to sensitive receptors
33. Site specific conditions
34. Require restoration plan

APPENDIX 6: CONSULTATION BODY COMMENTS ON THE SCOPING REPORT TEMPLATE

SA Topic	Date	Comments	How addressed
General Comments	DAERA: NIEA NED 14/08/2018	NIEA is broadly content with the envisaged layout of the SEA report template. A number of baseline data sources and relevant strategies/reports are detailed in the Local Development Plans, DAERA Environmental Evidence and Information Guidance available at: https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/development-plan-evidence-guide-documents. There is likely to be some overlap between the information required for the SEA assessment and the information that is gathered for technical LDP papers such as Countryside Assessments. However, it should be noted that we have not reviewed technical reports as part of this scoping consultation and there may be additional significant environmental issues affected by new development that should be considered in the environmental report such as cumulative loss of habitat or changes to air quality, both urban and rural. The scope and level of detail of information in the SEA should be proportionate to the content and purpose of the plan. Whilst regional or district based trends and indicators may help to assess certain high level and strategic aspects of the plans more detailed and spatially specific information would be required to assess other elements of the plan in particular any aspects of the plan with a spatial dimension or influence. The Development Plan Practice Note for Sustainability Appraisal incorporating SEA was produced by the former Department of the Environment in 2015. This document is intended to guide users through the key requirements of a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and SEA and deals primarily with procedures as well as good practice. Some of its content may be useful when developing the SEA documents associated with the LDP such as Preferred Options papers. https://www.planningni.gov.uk/index/advice/practicoes/dp_practice_note_4_sa.pdf	Noted. Data referred to in https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/daera/daera-environmental-evidence-guide-may-2017.pdf has been accessed and, where available, information at Council level has been sourced. The need to access more spatially specific information to inform spatial designations is noted and will be considered at Plan Strategy.
Natural Resources	DAERA: NIEA NED 14/08/2018	<u>Biodiversity Flora and Fauna</u> NIEA is broadly content with the envisaged layout of the SEA report template.	Local biodiversity is referred to and any relevant Action Plan and priority habitats and species are referred to but should be in greater detail at the next PS stage.

SA Topic	Date	Comments	How addressed
		NIEA welcome the inclusion of Nature Conservation Sites, Biodiversity, Green /Blue Infrastructure and Ecosystems Services within the scope of the Natural Resources topic 5.12. NIEA would expect that priority habitats and species would be included. There are significant interactions between Biodiversity and the topics Health & Well-being, Physical Resources, Water, Air, Landscape and Climatic Factors. Under topic 5.13, Landscape, NIEA would expect that, if appropriate, that Areas of High Scenic Value would be considered. <u>Baseline Evidence</u> Information sources include: NIEA Natural Heritage datasets including protected sites and landscape character assessments: https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/download-digital-datasets NIEA Natural Heritage web-viewer which includes protected sites and priority habitats: https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/services/natural-environment-map-viewer Northern Ireland State of the Environment Report https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/state-environment-report-2013 Northern Ireland Environmental Statistics Report 2017 https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-environmentalstatistics-report-2018 National Ecosystems Assessment, Chapter 18 on Northern Ireland http://uknea.unepwcmc.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=m%2BvhAV3c9uk%3D&ta Priority species records may be obtained from the Centre for Environmental Data and Recording (CEDaR). These can be accessed by contacting CEDaR, National Museums NI, 153 Bangor Road, Cultra, Holywood, BT18 0EU. Website: https://www.nmni.com/CEDaR/CEDaR-Centre-for-Environmental-Data-and-Recording.aspx	Please note that we refer to <i>Climate Change</i> as a topic, as opposed to climatic factors. Landscape does refer to one AoHSV as highlighted in the relevant LDP position paper from the Council's Plan team. Appendix 7 provides baseline information about European and Ramsar sites. The need to access more spatially specific information (e.g. priority species and non-designated priority habitat) to inform spatial designations will be considered at Plan Strategy We refer to the most up to date reports and data sources to maintain current baseline information.
Natural Resources	DAERA: NIEA NED 14/08/2018	<u>Marine</u> It is advised that marine planning sits alongside and interacts with terrestrial planning systems. When taking any decision which relates to any function capable of affecting (or which might affect) the marine area, which is not an authorisation or enforcement decision, Section 58 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 (MCAA) and Section 8 of the Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013, require a	Noted. Details of the strategic context referred to have been included in Section 4.3.5 and Appendix 4 and/or Water or Natural Heritage topics where available.

SA Topic	Date	Comments	How addressed
		public authority to have regard to the appropriate marine policy documents. Appropriate marine policy documents include the UK Marine Policy Statement (UK MPS) and the Marine Plan for Northern Ireland (when adopted). This means that in preparation of the Ards and North Down Local Development Plan and all of its associated documents, including this Scoping Report, you (working on behalf of the Council as the public authority), must ensure that this Scoping Report has regard to the UK Marine Policy Statement (as the current marine policy document). Careful attention must be paid to the UK MPS, as this document has the equivalent standing consistent with that of the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) and the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS). Specific comments are outlined below: - It is suggested that the objectives for sustainable development (page 1) include the marine aspect. - MCG - Marine Coordination Group is listed in the Glossary but this term is not evident within in the document. - Given the Council area shares a significant boundary with the marine area it is suggested that the marine area is reflected within the Connected principle under Section 3.2 and within Section 3.3. - Given the Council has a legal responsibility to have regard to marine policy documents, it is advised that reference to the UK MPS is included within Section 4.2, 5.2 and 5.3 (and Appendix 4). The UK MPS sets out the framework for taking decisions that affect the marine area. As marine planning policy, it sits alongside and interacts with terrestrial planning policy. - Marine issues should not be limited to 'environmental' related SA topic areas. Consequently, you are advised to have regard to the policies contained within the UK MPS for each of the SA topics listed in Table 5.1 to ensure the scope is appropriate. - It is suggested that baseline information / evidence base on the marine area can be obtained from the SA Scoping Report for the Marine Plan for Northern Ireland, which is available on the DAERA website at: https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/topics/marine/marine-planning We welcome the document's recognition of 'maritime' heritage assets under 14. Historic Environment and Cultural Resources (p. 16). This definition should be inclusive of boat finds and shipwrecks, prehistoric archaeological remains and	Noted. Reference to the NI Marine Plan will be updated once it is published. Noted. Included under Natural Resources. This has been removed. This has been addressed in the Connected principle, now section 2.2. This has been addressed in sections 3.2, 4.3.5 and Appendix 4. Marine is covered under Natural Resources but in the SA all options are appraised against all objectives: social, economic and environmental. Noted. Noted.

SA Topic	Date	Comments	How addressed
		aircraft losses and further recognise the potential importance of non- designated sites as per the Marine Policy Statement (MPS) and emerging regional Marine Plan for Northern Ireland. Marine planning and its associated obligations need to be appropriately considered within the LDP not just for Natural Resources (see Key Sustainability Issues, p. 33) but also for cultural heritage resources. Information on the location of all archaeological/historic sites held in the Monuments and Building Record (MBR) of Northern Ireland can be obtained by contacting the MBR Team at mbr-enquiries@communities-ni.gov.uk. Information available from the Northern Ireland Sites and Monuments Record can also be found online at: https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/services/sites-and-monuments-record. The SEA should also recognise the potential impact upon sites and features that are otherwise unrecorded and not just designated and recorded sites and features. In other words there needs to be clear recognition of the potential importance of newly discovered sites and features that may arise as a result of activities. The SEA should consider the potential effects of plan activities in relation to current understanding of submerged cultural heritage in the context of international and national protection measures, planning policy and best practice industry guidance. The SEA should recognise the potential for impact on marine archaeology arising from proposed activities in marine and intertidal areas and that site-specific surveys may be necessary before development decisions can be taken to prevent any loss to the marine archaeological resource. Relevant policies for the protection and conservation of archaeological remains and elements of the historic landscape in marine and intertidal areas include: PPS 6 Planning, Archaeology and the Built Heritage and Addendum; Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS); Marine Policy Statement (MPS) and the emerging Marine Plan for NI. The Regional Development Strategy (RDS) also supports the conservation and protection of cultural heritage, whilst recognising heritage as key tourism and recreational assets. The SEA should also recognise the Annex or 'Rules' of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage (2001) as being 'best practice' policy for underwater archaeology (in line with the rest of the UK). The SEA should include the heading of Bathing Water Directive under section 6.11.2 (page 24) to ensure this topic is addressed when the review of baseline information is carried out. The SEA should highlight that all construction or deposition works below the Mean High Water Spring Tide (MHWST) mark are subject to licensing under	Noted. Noted. Noted. Please note that it may not always be feasible to refer in detail to every piece of relevant legislation within the SA Scoping Report Section 5 but the PPP at Appendix 4 has listed all the relevant plans, policies, programmes and strategies including conventions. This is covered in section 5.11.1. Noted.

SA Topic	Date	Comments	How addressed
		the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. Developments in the inter-tidal area may require both planning permission and a marine licence. Further information may be obtained from the Marine Licensing Team, DAERA Marine and Fisheries Division, 1st Floor, Klondyke Building, Gasworks Business Park, Cromac Avenue, Belfast BT7 2JA, Tel: 028 90569247.	
Air Quality	DAERA: NIEA NED 14/082018	Local Development Plan Page 49: 'Will help achieve AQMA objectives' there are no AQMAs at present in Ards and North Down Borough Council. More appropriate wording would be 'Will help maintain air quality objectives, targets and guidelines' the opposite of this will need to be inserted where it states 'unlikely to help meet AQMA objectives'.	Noted. Please note that the Air Quality topic refers to AQMAs if they are evident. The SA guide used in the SA refers to AQMAs to help discussion regarding policy options.
Noise	DAERA: NIEA NED 14/12/2018	It is noted that 'Noise' is one of the 'Health and Wellbeing' topics. Considerations should include: Noise maps for Northern Ireland that the Department has produced which can be found at https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/noise Relevant guidance and standards for noise as well as the Noise Policy statement: https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/doe/noise-policy-statement-ni.PDF The presence and location of any Quiet Areas.	Addressed. There is one Quiet Area relevant to the Council.
Water Quality	DAERA: NIEA NED 14/08/2018	NIEA note that the Water Framework Directive (WFD) has been identified within the draft SEA Scoping template. It is key that the Ards and North Down Borough Council Local Development Plan takes the WFD and statutory River Basin Management Plans into consideration and the achievement of the objectives therein. As a public body, the council has a duty to have regard to - (a) the river basin management plan for that district; and (b) any supplementary plan published under regulation 16 in exercising their duties. River Basin Management is a key element in implementing the Water Framework Directive (WFD), taking 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. Revised River Basin Management plans were published in December 2015. The plans relevant to your area will be: North East River Basin management plan summary (December 2015)	All comments are noted. Specific information on water quality within the Council area was obtained from NIEA and incorporated in the Water section. The RBMPs (and FRMPs) were reviewed and information incorporated into the scoping at a proportionate scale for this stage of the Plan process.

SA Topic	Date	Comments	How addressed
		Updated information on the water quality classifications of surface waters and groundwaters in the Ards and North Down Borough Council area should be obtained from nieawaterinfo@daera-ni.gov.uk As part of the River Basin Planning process a Programme of Measures has been established to detail the improvements required to meet 'Good' status, the actions required and the delivery mechanisms. The programme of measures aims to address the key pressures by concentrating efforts on those pressures that pose the greatest threat to the water environment. From pressure assessments conducted we have identified two significant sources of pressure preventing water bodies from achieving good status in the North East RBD. These are diffuse pressures from agricultural sources and point source pressures from WWTWs and industrial discharges. Other pressures include: ■ diffuse and point source pollution - pollution arising from a number of other sources including forestry, sediment urban catchments, quarries & mines, waste & contaminated land and chemicals; ■ water quantity and flow - taking too much water from rivers, lakes and groundwater which causes problems for wildlife, reduces the amount of water available for people to use and affects the environmental ecology; ■ the physical condition of the water environment - man made changes to the natural habitat of rivers, lakes, estuaries and coastal waters, for example flood defences and weirs, and changes to the natural river channels for land drainage and navigation. These modifications alter natural flows, may cause excessive build-up of sediment, increase erosion, reduce the quality of habitats and may also present a barrier to fish movement; ■ invasive alien species - the negative effects on the health of the water environment and native plants and animals from those species originating outside Northern Ireland and introduced to the Northern Ireland water environment; and ■ other pressures - factors that affect fish populations and habitat not captured above. The Programmes of Measures have been brigaded under topics and each of the documents are available from the DAERA web-site, under the following Programme of Measures topic headings: Agriculture; Sewage & Industry; Forestry; Sediment; Urban Catchment; Quarries & Mines including Oil & Gas exploration; Waste & Contaminated land; Chemicals; Abstraction & Flow Regulation; Morphology; Invasive Alien Species; and Fisheries.	POMs are noted in 5.12.2 however we have not reproduced these in full in the SA Scoping. Pressures are discussed under the River Basin Management Plans section of 5.12.2

SA Topic	Date	Comments	How addressed
		The SA/SEA should be proportionate in assessing these measures against the likely impact of Local Development Plan documents. A full list of the measures has been included as an Annex to this letter, for ease of future reference. <u>Waste Water Treatment Provision</u> A technical paper for the LDP (or the SA/SEA) should identify all the waste water treatment works (WWTW's) and sewerage networks in your Council area and assess them against their current capacity, and environmental performance, and their predicated capacity during the lifetime of the Local Development Plan. This information should be aligned with Northern Ireland Waters infrastructure investment strategy set out in their price Control processes and the Long Term Water Strategy. Sustainable Water – A Long Term Water Strategy for Northern Ireland (to be published 2016) PC15 (NIW's draft expenditure plan 2015-2021). This information should be used proportionately in the different stages of the LDP SA/SEA process. At some stage in the process suitable mitigation measures may be required to ensure the zoning of land and the timing of the release of that land for development is aligned with the availability of suitable waste water treatment infrastructure to service the developments to ensure there is adequate protection for the water environment. We would recommend the water topic should be split to form a topic on water quality and resources, and a separate topic on flood risk. <u>Sustainable Drainage Systems</u> The Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) states that the planning system should help to mitigate and adapt to climate change by, among other actions, working with natural environmental processes, for example through promoting the development of green infrastructure and also the use of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) to reduce flood risk and improve water quality. In managing development, particularly in areas susceptible to surface water flooding, planning authorities should encourage developers to use sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) as the preferred drainage solution. Such systems are widely used in other UK jurisdictions and have been	The most recently available information from NIW on WwTW capacity and programmed expenditure / capital works has been included in section 5.11.2. Flooding has been addressed under the Water and Climate Change topics and was fully considered in appraisal. SES will retain the main reference to flooding within the Water chapter, with the agreement of DfI Rivers.

SA Topic	Date	Comments	How addressed
		shown to be more effective than traditional piped drainage in reducing surface water flooding as well as providing other environmental, economic and social benefits. Furthermore, using permeable materials for hard landscaped surfaces in new developments can reduce soil sealing. NIEA recommends that Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) are incorporated, and where appropriate, into the drainage design of all new developments for the environmental management of rainfall / surface water drainage. Temporary SuDS can also be used during the construction phase as pollution prevention measures for silt management and to prevent erosion. Where possible these should be retained or adapted as part of the final permanent site drainage solution. Surface water should be dealt with as close as possible to where it falls as rain (source control) and the use of two or more SuDS components can be used for the optimal solution to: ■ Manage rainfall to mimic natural drainage by: □ reducing runoff rates; □ reducing additional runoff volumes and frequencies; and □ encouraging natural groundwater recharge. ■ Minimise impacts on quantity and quality of runoff by: □ reducing pollution and protecting the quality of receiving waters; □ preventing direct discharge of spillage; and □ reducing the volume of surface waste runoff to sewers. ■ Maximise amenity and biodiversity opportunity by: □ contributing to the amenity and aesthetic value of the development; and □ providing habitat for wildlife and biodiversity.	This has been discussed under a new SuDS heading in chapter 5.11.2.
Other Comments	DAERA: NIEA NED 14/08/2018	Page (III), 12 ...reduce causes of and adapt to climate change. The value of peat as a carbon store is well known, however, in terms of adaptation to combat the impacts of climate change, the 'protection' of natural resources such as peat could be complimented by the 'restoration of peat that has become inactive. The importance of protection of peat which is currently inactive and the weighting to be given to it therefore is an option to consider. Page7, 2.8 Appraisal of reasonable alternatives for the Preferred Options Paper refers to Table 3.1, however, this is not readily identifiable in the Report. Page 20, The Evidence Base, section 5.3 Housing, will contaminated land be considered in respect of risks to potential future developments?	This level of detail is usually discussed in the appraisals of policy options relating to nature conservation/landscape issues. This has been corrected to Table 2.8.1. Full matrices will be available in the SA Interim Report. All policy options including <i>housing</i>, are appraised against the 14 sustainability objectives in the sustainability appraisal and under

SA Topic	Date	Comments	How addressed
		Page 24, section 5.7, are Soil and Groundwater considered as physical resources? Page 26, section 5.9, should consideration be given to air quality issues associated with construction sites and waste management sites? Page 28, section 5.11 will surface water/over land flow within the Borough be considered? Page 43 Negative effects linked to housing on contaminated land i.e. sites not remediated properly therefore risk to human health? Page 46, Objective 6...manage material assets sustainably considers waste as a resource for the Borough but consideration still needs to be given to waste disposal for the Borough. The circular economy is all well and good to consider but does it fully capture and protect the Borough in relation to the full scope of waste management legislation. What waste disposal capacity does the Borough have? Page 47, Objective 7...protect physical resources and use sustainably perhaps consideration is given to contaminated land within the Borough her?	Material Assets, derelict and contaminated land is considered. However, it is not referred to as its own sub-heading within the baseline evidence for Housing. <i>Soil and groundwater</i> are referred to in the SA Scoping Report under the Physical Resources topic. <i>Groundwater</i> is also referred to under the Water topic. All policy options are appraised against the 14 sustainability objectives including <i>Air Quality</i>, so any potential air quality issues from different stages of development or the function of the proposal should be considered. Yes – this is addressed within the Water topic where we refer to flooding. All policy options are appraised against all 14 sustainability objectives which include <i>Health and well-being</i> as well as <i>Community</i> and so any negative effects should be recognised and appropriately considered at the appraisal stage. Exact zonings for housing should be reappraised at PS stage. Noted. Waste management is covered under the Material Assets topic and within this section information on the waste management baseline for the Borough as per information in the LDP position papers. <i>Land use</i> is referred to under Physical Resources but <i>derelict</i>

SA Topic	Date	Comments	How addressed
		There does not appear to be any clear objective appraisal in relation to contaminated land within the Borough. Brief considerations are given to contaminated land but nothing really specific.	and <i>contaminated land</i> can be referred to under the Material Assets topic. Both topics are cross-referenced in the SA Scoping Report. <i>Derelict and contaminated land</i> can be considered under the Material Assets topic. During the sustainability appraisal of all the options, Material Assets is considered and part of this process includes reference to the use of derelict or contaminated land. This information is located in the SA Guide Appraisal Prompts under Objective 6. The exact amount of derelict/contaminated land and its location should become more obvious at the PS stage however, we have added a sub-heading on this for Ards and North Down. SES will discuss how to further integrate this topic moving forward from POP to PS.
SA Topic	Date	Comments	How addressed
General	HED 07/08/2019	List of Abbreviations. HED would advise that we should be included in this list and highlight use of our abbreviated title within the content of the report.	The list of abbreviations has been updated.
Housing		5.3.4 Sustainability Issues for Housing HED would question why issues such as rates of second home ownership/holiday homes and vacancy rates are not considered as sustainability issues in relation to housing.	There is currently no evidence to indicate that there are sustainability issues arising from second home ownership in this Borough.
Physical Resources		Page 70. In relation to discussion of the potential Global Geopark Status it is important to highlight that although not a statutory designation the designation does place expectations with regard to sustainable management of the area to maintain its geological heritage, so alongside the other important attributes to which this links (e.g cultural heritage). These areas are reviewed periodically and the status may be removed where an area no longer meets the criteria for designation.	Section 5.7.2 has been updated.

SA Topic	Date	Comments	How addressed
Landscape & Seascape		5.13.4 Key Sustainability Issues for Landscape HED highlight the intertwined relationship of the historic environment with landscape, seascape and the natural environment (we welcome the recognition that this is given further in the report as is an important consideration in the approach to scoring) We suggest that you may wish to consider: • The intimate and sometimes blurred relationship between the marine and the terrestrial environment in the borough. • The extensive historic and cultural landscapes and the visible influence of past societies on the modern appearance of the landscape. (worthy of note that the shores of Strangford Lough contain the preserved remnants of ancient forests subsumed into the intertidal zone). • The borough contains many islands, which because of their isolation often retain important natural and historic environment qualities. • The removal of hedgerows, and particularly historic boundaries such as townland and parish boundaries is a key issue for landscape.	The intertwined relationship is noted in 5.14.1 and overlaps between sustainability themes are noted at the beginning of each baseline sub-section. The maintenance/reflection of historic routes and boundaries is included as a KSI.
Historic Environment & CH		Advise 1985 as date of Granada Convention (87 was adoption) Article 10 is particularly relevant to the formulation of your plan, whereby the convention seeks to: Include the protection of the architectural heritage as an essential town and country planning objective and ensure that this requirement is taken into account at all stages, both in the drawing up of development plans and in the procedures for authorising work.	Appendix 4 and chapter 5.14.1 have been updated.
Historic Environment & CH		Page 129. We welcome the recognition given to the impact of the Plantation period on the placenames and dialect of the area and advise that it is important to also consider its impact in the form of physical features such as buildings and monuments. We also advise that it is important to note that very many of the placenames and attributes in the borough derive from earlier times, including the medieval and early Christian periods, and from the Irish, Norse and English languages as well. It is important that this too is appreciated in the evidence base in order to demonstrate a clear understanding of how the borough's historic environment and cultural heritage has been shaped by previous generations.	This text was an excerpt from the Corporate Plan which has since been superseded. 5.14.1 has been updated.
Economy & Employment		Last paragraph (typo — intertwined is used twice) and continuation onto page 30. As per our comments above HED consider it worthy of note that the historic environment has been a key draw with regard to providing an authentic setting with regard to film and television production activity in your area. This is important to recognise, as if this	Typo has been corrected This element has been added to the baseline, section 5.5.2.

SA Topic	Date	Comments	How addressed
		quality is impacted by inappropriate development activity, there becomes potential for adverse economic impact as well.	
Historic Environment & CH		5.14.2 Baseline Information See our comments at the end of this paper in relation to the historic environment position paper. Overview: We recognise the language from BMAP in the overview and while we acknowledge and welcome the recognition given to Bangor and Crawfordsburn we advise that the overview should really be broadened out to demonstrate a wider but still general appreciation of the historic environment characteristics of the borough which helps more robustly justify content of the second paragraph with regard to the quality of the historic environment.	Comments noted and 5.14.2 has been reworded.
Historic Environment & CH		With regard to scheduled monuments and their implications as relates to the planning process, it is important to consider how these sites are protected, and issues around scheduled monument consent, which is legislatively separate to and distinct from planning permission.	The SA has acknowledged the importance of scheduled monuments. Scheduled Monument Consent is a separate legal requirement outside the scope of a sustainability appraisal.
Historic Environment & CH		HED advise that it is the particularly distinctive historic landscape rather than just the site and island at Nendrum itself that is identified as the ASAI. This is important in the context of the application of the SPPS with regard to ASAI.	The general text on ASAls in 5.14.2 recognises that the designation relates to areas with distinctive historic landscape and therefore this would also apply to Nendrum.
Historic Environment & CH		HED welcome the recognition given to the Gazetteer of Historic Nucleated Urban Settlements in how this informs the identification of AAP. We also highlight that the use of the term “designated” with regard to AAP does not align with the SPPS which highlights that they are identified to inform developers, of those areas in urban settlements, where on the basis of current knowledge there is a likelihood of encountering archaeological remains.	5.14.2 has been amended to use the correct terminology.
Historic Environment & CH		HED advise that it would be worth cross referencing to the published archaeological survey of Strangford Lough, which gave recognition to the lough and its environs as an important maritime cultural landscape.	Comment noted. The SA is a strategic assessment - the Borough’s maritime cultural landscape is acknowledged in the Scoping Report at a detail proportionate to that of the Plan.
Historic Environment & CH		HED welcome the consideration of designating G/abbey as a CA due to the areas special architectural and historic interest, in line with requirements of the Planning Act (2011).	No action required.

SA Topic	Date	Comments	How addressed
Historic Environment & CH		8" bullet point — recommend “explored and conserved” in relation to the issue on Areas of Archaeological Potential	KSI has been amended to suggested
Historic Environment & CH		2" bullet point - “Defence and other heritage” HED advise some rewording is necessary here, i.e. Some sites which aren’t designated, such as sites recorded on the Northern Ireland Sites and Monuments Record do have protection as sites of Local Importance under Strategic Planning Policy. We would consider that Defence Heritage and Industrial Heritage, where not designated through scheduling or listing should be considered in the same way. We advise that additional points might be considered: - There is recognition of the economic role of the historic environment with regard to tourism, but the additional attraction it has played in providing authentic and attractive locations for film and television production should be protected and expanded on. - Sustainable re-use of disused historic harbours.	This KSI has been removed, the issue of loss of defence and industrial heritage is encompassed within another KSI. KSIs have been updated to recognise emerging role in production locations.
Appendix 2		HED welcome that the relationship of the strategic objective with regard to the historic environment, to landscape is clearly articulated in this table.	No action required
Appendix 4		Page 176. HED advise that the Protection of Wrecks Act should be recorded against the Historic Environment topic area rather than Landscape. We would advise review of the landscape character assessments for your area, taking account of historic landscape characteristics in order to improve the robustness of your evidence base.	Entry corrected.
Appendix 4		Page 177. Typo in relation to Xi'an Declaration - should read ICOMOS as lead organisation.	Entry corrected.
Appendix 4		Page 178. We must advise that the Valletta Convention is not a revision of Granada (although it does have a regard to it). We also advise that the Granada Convention is 1985 rather than 1987 in the line below.	Entry corrected.
Appendix 4		Page 180. Correction - We advise that the Department for Communities, Historic Environment Division are the lead organisation with regard to the Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects (NI) Order 1995.	Entry corrected.
Historic Environment & CH		HED advise of the following guidance documents which will be useful in continuing SA and policy formulation with regard to historic environment matters: https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/communities/heritage-guidance-on-sustainability-appraisal-and-strategic-environmental-assessment-for-the-historic-environment.pdf https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/guidance-setting-and-historic-environment	Guidance has been noted and taken into account

SA Topic	Date	Comments	How addressed
Historic Environment & CH		Page 199. See our previous comments in relation to Key Sustainability Issues for the historic environment.	No action required
Historic Environment & CH		Page 200. Suggest an additional negative appraisal prompt "Increase neglect of heritage assets", (e.g. historic buildings).	Extra appraisal prompt added
General	NIEA 08/08/2019	Re: Local Development Plan Preferred Options Paper Ards and North Down Borough Council Sustainability Appraisal — Scoping Report and Interim Report DAERA welcome the opportunity to comment on the Ards and North Down Preferred Options Paper: March 2019 Sustainability Appraisal. The documents are well set out and easy to follow.	Noted and welcomed
Physical Resources		Sustainability Appraisal — Scoping Report In reference to Physical Resources, page 66, whilst it is acknowledged that 'peat' is not common in the Borough, it is a resource providing ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration and water attenuation, however, it is neither mentioned in the 'Physical Resources section nor in the ecosystems services section on page 120.	Noted – SES to review in respect of peat resource – check recent scoping reports for section on peatland strategy (extra note – peatland role in carbon storage and surface water capture discussed in biodiversity section of climate change chapter 5.10)
Climate Change/Natural Resources		DAERA notes the key sustainability issue for climate change to "protect habitats ...which act as natural adaption measures for climate change, as well as protecting habitat for local biodiversity" and would welcome strong policy protection on this issue.	No action required.
Natural Resources		It is unclear exactly what is inferred by the writer in reference to Lough Cowey on page 116 as "just" a SLNCI.	Intended meaning that this site may not have other policy protection – wording has been reviewed and amended.
Natural Resources		DAERA looks forward to the publication of the new LBAP (page 118).	Noted.
Landscape		The 'Key Sustainability Issues for Landscape", page 128 are noted, and in reference to the fifth, sixth and seventh bullet points concerning: additional development and detriment to rural character and landscape settings; development that has detracted from local rural character and the need for "appropriate design" and neglected boundaries; these issues would all be better informed through an updated Landscape Character Assessment (see guidance: https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/daera/final-lca-guidance-with-template.pdf)	AND has commissioned an independent Landscape Character Review to inform its detailed evidence base. This review will be published alongside the Plan.
Appendix 3		Compatibility of the Sustainability Objectives scores sustainability issues 12 and 13 as having 'no relationship' with provision of housing and that economic growth is compatible with the maintenance and enhancement of landscape character. There are many examples where this is not the case and a	Noted and agree – relationship has been amended from 0 to ? in Appendix 3

SA Topic	Date	Comments	How addressed
		rethink as to the nature of the relationship in these cases may provide a different score.	
General		DAERA note the Habitats Regulations Assessment Baseline Report in Appendix 7 of the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report and look forward to receipt of the final HRA Report. The relationship between WWTW capacity and housing growth is rightly highlighted. The relationship between combined sewer overflows (CSOs) and weather events may also impact water quality.	5.11 includes a summary of identified issues around wastewater infrastructure.
Material Assets		Contaminated land Considerations. In general the POP Sustainability Appraisal does not identify how the Borough will manage land affected by contamination. There are some brief comments relating to brownfield sites however no specific “key issue” on the topic. Identifying and managing the impacts of contaminated land needs to be considered further. Specific policies should be considered linked to land contamination. Should Part III of the Waste and Contaminated Land (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 be enacted then this would place increased roles and responsibilities on the Borough in relation to contaminated land. The Borough should be aware of this and have the foresight to consider policies for this topic.	Historic industrial land use and derelict land is discussed in 5.6.2 and this section has been updated to include the potential constraints to developing this land.
Water Resources		It is noted that reference is made to the UK Marine Policy Statement in the introductory sections (1.2 and 3.2) of the Interim SA Report. However, it is not included within the Strategic Context of the approach to the SA as outlined in Chapter 2 and it is advised that reference to the UK MPS is included here.	The UK MPS is referenced in section 4.3 Strategic context of the SA Scoping Report.
Physical Resources / Natural Resources		Earth Science/Geological Conservation. There is no mention under objective 12 (protect natural resources and enhance biodiversity) of geology or Earth Science, but it is mentioned objective 7 (protect physical resources). In section 5.7.1 there is perhaps an implication that Earth Science/Geology is only conserved as an exploitable resource not for its inherent value to nature conservation, though geological conservation interest sites are mentioned later in the text.	Earth science and conservation of geological conservation/geodiversity are included in 5.7.
Historic Environment & CH		Updates In respect of the proposed updates HED welcome the intended updates and highlight again our historic-environment-digital-datasets and historic-environment-map-viewer. Resources to aid in updating the documentation in relation to heritage assets located in the borough. We also advise specifically of the following resources, which are pertinent to the SEA of the draft plan strategy. Conservation Principles guidance Department for Communities (communitiesni.gov.uk) (PLEASE REFER TO Parts 1 & 2) Environmental Evidence and Information - Guidance on Natural and Historic	Noted – review in chapter update

SA Topic	Date	Comments	How addressed
		Environment evidence bases (daera-ni.gov.uk) (NB this guidance was updated again in 2021)	
Historic Environment & CH		HED advise of the organic nature of our records and the need to reutilize these in the assessment as many have been subject to update. For example in recent years a comprehensive survey of Defence Heritage in Northern Ireland has considerably increased our record holdings on our wartime and post war military heritage. The Register of parks, gardens and demesnes of special historic interest has undergone update, and further work continues in relation carried out with regard to - The Gazetteer of Historic Nucleated Urban Settlements Department for Communities (communities-ni.gov.uk).	Defence heritage database has been referenced in 5.14
Historic Environment & CH		We suggest that given the issues around addressing dereliction of heritage assets and heritage at risk, that the second sentence of the SA Framework Objective narrative for Objective 14 might be amended to read "This can be achieved by Protecting, conserving and enhancing heritage assets and promoting the sustainable re-use of historic buildings."	Agree - the Sustainability Objective has been updated as there are wider cross-cutting benefits to sustainable re-use of buildings.
Historic Environment & CH		Comments on SA scoping report: HED consider that in the overview for the Historic Environment, page 130 there is potential merit in reflecting how parts of the peninsula landscape and history shares similar attributes to those in the Lecale part of the recently designated Mourne Gullion, Strangford UNESCO Geopark.	This sub-section has been updated.
Historic Environment & CH		Listed Buildings (Page 130) To avoid any ambiguity, HED clarifies that a 'Record Only' asset is not listed – it is a building or structure that has been surveyed by the Department but not added to the list of buildings of special interest.	This sub-section has been updated.
Historic Environment & CH		Areas of Significant Archaeological Interest (Page 131). HED suggest that the second sentence be amended, rather than including the word "site", to read ".....however a landscape focused around Nendrum....." as ASAI's are landscapes scale rather than site specific designations. For information see also Areas of Significant Archaeological Interest Department for Communities (communities-ni.gov.uk).	The section on ASAI has been updated to reflect the comment. .
Historic Environment & CH		Areas of Archaeological Potential (Page 131-132) It would be more correct to state "of which 15 do not currently have an existing AAP identified)" Please also note, as per SPPS 6.29 that AAP are identified in plans rather than designated through them (as ASAI are). HED advise that to date that for AAP several councils to whom we have provided advice seem to be opting to identify these at Local Policies stage of the LDP	The section on AAP has been updated to reflect the comment. .

SA Topic	Date	Comments	How addressed
Historic Environment & CH		Marine Historic Environment (Page 132) Informative for corrective purposes – on current evidence the Neolithic actually finishes around 4500 years ago, having begun some 6000 years ago. – The Greyabbey logboat itself is known to date back over 5000 years.	Section has been corrected
Historic Environment & CH		Defence Heritage (Page 133) HED would strongly recommend a review of our Defence Heritage datasets following dedicated survey carried out in recent years, which has focused on identification and description of surviving assets of the period of which there were over 4500 recorded during this work. In relation to airfields it would be truer to say “or have been partially demolished” as few have been erased entirely from the landscape.	This sub-section has been updated.
Historic Environment & CH		Conservation Areas (Page 133) HED welcomes the acknowledgment of the potential for further a Conservation Area designation within the district at Greyabbey. Given the available evidence base from the ADAP 2015 and historic environment evidence bases, it may be timely for the Council to review and take forward this new Conservation Area designation alongside the Plan Strategy public consultation process toward enhanced policy protection for this area of acknowledged special architectural and historic interest.	The SA is a strategic assessment highlights the importance of Conservation Areas. The designation of specific sites is a detailed policy issue and outside the scope of strategic assessment.
Historic Environment & CH		5.14.3 Likely evolution of the baseline – (Page 133) Consider also the potential the LDP offers for identification and review of ATC, LLPAs, and AVC. HED are uncertain on the sentence that the setting of assets or places would not be protected in the absence of an LDP in that current policy arrangements of PPS6 and SPPS would still apply, so possibly worth rewording or excluding this aspect.	This sub-section has been updated.
Historic Environment & CH		5.14.4 Key Sustainability Issues (Page 134) HED advise that among the sustainability issues there is merit in considering the issue of reduced funding available for conservation of heritage assets. We also suggest that given the statement on Greyabbey a sustainability issue merits articulation on the point that, evidence suggests that Greyabbey village merits consideration for designation as a conservation area, to assist in conserving, maintaining and enhancing the unique heritage qualities of the settlement - Bullet point 3: suggest amending text to “protecting this individual sense of place” Bullet point 6: suggest inserting “The innovative and conservation led reuse of existing historic building stock...” Bullet point 8: makes important reference to archaeological heritage. HED would advise that this point could be expanded upon to include additional text along the lines that: Below ground	The KSIs in section 5.14.4 have been reviewed and updated. The designation of specific sites is a detailed policy issue and outside the scope of SA, which is a strategic assessment.

SA Topic	Date	Comments	How addressed
		archaeological heritage can be vulnerable to permanent destruction through new development and there may be requirements to preserve archaeological remains in situ. HED suggest this given the potential irreversibility and significance of effects with regard to below ground remains. Bullet point 9: HED advise the removal of the second sentence of this bullet point as the issue of setting, while it will include issues of topography and landscape context is nonetheless varied and specific to individual assets. Bullet point 12: There is a degree of inaccuracy in this statement in the report. Defence and Industrial Heritage assets, (along with unscheduled monuments in the sites and monuments record) do have planning protection under existing provisions in PPS6 and SPPS as archaeological remains of local importance in their own right, or as a non-designated heritage asset, such as a vernacular structure or historic building of local importance. With regard to Defence and Industrial Heritage and other undesignated assets not on the sites and monuments record, the plan does however offer an opportunity to more clearly articulate their local value and recognise their contribution to the evolution of the borough's distinct character. Bullet point 13: Given the point relates to the value of the interrelationship between heritage assets and their settings, particularly for the large houses and their designed landscapes and gardens, HED suggest that the second line is amended to read "The natural and historic environment can add value to each other" in lieu of 'built environment' which can relate to all built structures of all ages, styles and quality.	
Historic Environment & CH		HED also highlight again for the purposes of assessment the inter-relationship of the historic environment with other topic areas such as landscape, water and biodiversity and the natural environment. With regard to the Compatibility Objectives table in Appendix 3 we advise it would be more appropriate to reconsider the compatibility of objective 14 with objective 8. Very many heritage assets have found a renewed role in relation to sustainable travel, i.e. through use of Greenways etc. While effects might sometimes be uncertain the use of historic railways, canal towpaths and reclamation banks in this way can be well demonstrated. HED also advises a short explanation of the councils consideration of the relationships between the sustainability objectives would aid better understanding of the issues considered to inform the scoring, particularly where they are uncertain e.g. Objective 14 and 3.	Appendix 3 has been updated. The repurposing of historic transport routes is discussed in 5.8.

SA Topic	Date	Comments	How addressed
Historic Environment & CH		In Appendix 4, p. 146 it would also be important under the Planning Act (NI) 2011 to acknowledge the vires contained within the Act related to the designation of listed buildings (Section 80) and Conservation Area (Section 104).	The SA acknowledges the importance of listed buildings and conservation areas. Legal requirements and responsibilities are already established in law and are outside the scope of a sustainability appraisal.
General	NIEA 25/01/2024	DAERA would like the SEA Environmental Report, which will form part of the Integrated Sustainability Appraisal, to contain a clear statement indicating the opinion (and the reasons for it), about whether or not the implementation of the dPS, in combination with any identified measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment, is likely to have a significant effect. NED are content with the overall approach and scope of the SA, objectives and the issues that will be addressed. NED are content with the approach to alternatives and that the report will include proposed monitoring measures. Mitigation will also need to be considered and informed through the environmental report. Monitoring should be an iterative process built into the plan informing mitigation as the plan develops and is implemented. We welcome that a HRA will be carried out in parallel to the process. Appropriate Assessments should refer to the status of habitats and species in the relevant reports available on the JNCC website as follows: UK Article 17 report for the Habitats Directive https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/article-17-habitats-directive-report-2019/ UK Article 12 report for the Birds Directive https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/european-reporting/#birdsdirective-reporting	Comment noted. The SA will endeavour to identify clear conclusions and identify monitoring where relevant at this strategic level. Comments on HRA also noted.
Natural Resources		We welcome that a new Local Biodiversity Action Plan for the council area is in progress. Relevant plans and programmes in Northern Ireland that may be worth including in your considerations are: • The Wildlife (NI) Order 1985 (as amended) • Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (NI) 2011 • The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended) • The Environment (NI) Order 2002 • The Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017 • The Climate (NI) Act 2022	Noted. Legal requirements and responsibilities are already defined in law and are outside the scope of a Sustainability Appraisal.

SA Topic	Date	Comments	How addressed
		• The RDS Regional Development Strategy 2035 (infrastructure-ni.gov.uk) • The Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) for Northern Ireland • Planning Policy Statements (PPS – in particular PPS2 and PPS18). It should be noted that the PPS's will be superseded by Local Development Plans when they are adopted. • Northern Ireland Councils Local Development Plans • Biodiversity Strategy for NI to 2020 https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/biodiversitystrategy-northern-ireland-2020-0 • Draft Environment Strategy https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/consultations/esni-publicdiscussion-document • The Draft NI peatland policy: https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/consultations/ni-peatlandstrategy-consultation. • The Draft Green Growth Strategy Consultation on the draft Green Growth Strategy for Northern Ireland Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (daerani.gov.uk) • Northern Ireland Energy Strategy 2050 Northern Ireland Energy Strategy 2050 Department for the Economy (economy-ni.gov.uk)	
Natural Resources / Climate Change / Water Resources / Transport and Accessibility		A number of useful information sources that highlight the current state of the environment in Northern Ireland at a regional level and which could be referenced include: Northern Ireland State of the Environment Reports: https://www.daerani.gov.uk/publications/state-environment-report-2013 Northern Ireland Environmental Statistics Reports: https://www.daerani.gov.uk/articles/northern-ireland-environmental-statistics-report Other relevant web-links are; Designated Scientific Sites: www.daera-ni.gov.uk/landing-pages/protected-areas DAERA have a map browser for NI protected sites and known priority habitat: www.daera-ni.gov.uk/services/natural-environment-map-viewer Our natural environment datasets are available at the link below: www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/download-digital-datasets	Noted – these documents have been used in preparation of the Scoping report
Water Resources		Drinking Water Inspectorate comments DWI are content with the planned updates but would highlight the following to the Council as it may be of use in their updates:	Legal requirements and responsibilities are already defined in law and outside the scope of

SA Topic	Date	Comments	How addressed
		• Legislation should include the Drinking Water Directive 98/83/EC. Northern Ireland has not yet determined if it will implement the recast directive • The Drinking Water Quality in Northern Ireland, 2022 report has been issued and should be referenced when discussing any specific water quality issues for public and private supplies. NIW have also published their 2022 report which should be used for updated information. • Consideration to be given to the sustainability of private water supplies which are outside the remit of NIW and their Drinking Water Protected Areas and associated risk assessments	a Sustainability Appraisal. A new paragraph/ subsection has been added on private water supplies.
Climate Change		Climate Change Unit Comments We would refer Ards and North Down Borough Council to the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 which can be found at https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2022/31/contents/enacted Pg84 of the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (4th Paragraph) - The second Northern Ireland Climate Change Adaptation Programme (NICCAP2) was published in September 2019 and covers a 5-year period to 2024.	Section 5.10 has been extensively updated to reflect the enactment of this legislation and updates in the baseline, including NICCAP 2 and other new information.
Air Quality / Natural Resources		Air Quality Biodiversity Unit Comments • AQBU welcomes the consideration of impacts of aerial pollutants on internationally designated sites and would encourage the inclusion of site specific Conservation Objectives which highlight Nitrogen Deposition as an active off-site pressure on many designated sites. Information on Conservation Objectives can be found at SAC and SPA condition and conservation objectives JNCC - Adviser to Government on Nature Conservation • All proposed new development plans/projects should undergo plan and project level HRAs/environmental assessment (ASSIs and priority habitats), which should include assessment of the potential impacts from aerial emissions, including agricultural, industrial, infrastructure and residential developments. • For Objective 12. The objective for sustainable development is to protect natural resources and enhance biodiversity (P196), AQBU would encourage the highlighting of the effects of aerial pollutants on the biodiversity at protected sites. • The Air Pollution Information System Site Relevant Critical Loads and Source Attribution Air Pollution Information System (apis.ac.uk) contains the modelled NOx, ammonia and Nitrogen deposition levels across the UK and Ireland and information on the impacts of aerial pollutants on sensitive habitats.	Section 5.9.2. has been updated to include additional information.

SA Topic	Date	Comments	How addressed
		For further information on the impacts of aerial pollutants on sensitive habitats, please contact AQBU@daera-ni.gov.uk	
Air Quality		Air and Environmental Quality Comments. In the 'Summary of Proposed Scoping Report Updates ahead of DPS' document: • 5.9 Objective 9. Improve air quality - Achieving this objective may be facilitated by considering the addition of text around behavioural change, namely engagement in campaigns in relation to vehicle emissions and solid fuel burning.	This proposed change to the objective will not be implemented - these elements are outside the scope of a LDP, but are wider Environmental Health, Transport Plans and Community Planning issues. Behavioural change and encouraging modal shift are considered in the SA.
Water Resources		Water Management Unit Comments: The Sustainability Appraisal should consider all issues in relation to the aquatic environment during all aspects/phases in relation to the implementation of Ards and North Down Borough Council Local Development Plan (LDP) 2030 (hereafter referred to as LDP). Impacts that should be considered include, (but may not limited to), those relating to water quality, water quantity, hydromorphology. Assessment should consider all potential impacts both direct and indirect. After consideration, the Sustainability Appraisal should clearly state whether, or not, any potential impacts to the aquatic environment have been identified and the nature of those impacts.	Section 5.11 has been updated. SA is a strategic assessment and the assessment of effects should be proportionate. The SA will aim to deliver clear conclusions.
Water Resources		Plans and Programmes River Basin Management Plans are the key tools for implementing the Water Framework Directive and to achieving its objectives. If the potential for impacts to the aquatic environment in Northern Ireland are identified, then the NI River Basin Management Plans must be considered during the Sustainability Appraisal process. DAERA has published the Draft River Basin Management Plan for the 3rd cycle period which runs from 2021-2027. The draft plan provides an update on the health of Northern Ireland's water environment (the status of water bodies) and sets out our targets (objectives) and actions (programme of measures) on how we want to improve our water environment in the next six years. The draft plan covers the North Western, Neagh Bann and North Eastern river basin districts (RBD) and includes detailed status updates on each RBD. The documents can be downloaded from the consultation webpage: https://www.daerani.gov.uk/consultations/consultation-draft-3rd-cycle-river-basin-management-plan-2021-2027	Section 5.11.2 has been updated to include baseline information that has been published after 2019, including the draft 3rd cycle RBMP.
Water Resources		Legislation There are several key pieces of environmental legislation relating to the Water	The SA acknowledges the issues affecting

SA Topic	Date	Comments	How addressed
		Environment and its protection in Northern Ireland. A list of this environmental legislation including links to each individual piece of legislation is available at Water NetRegs Environmental guidance for your business in Northern Ireland & Scotland	water resources. Legal requirements and responsibilities are already defined in law and outside the scope of a sustainability appraisal.
Water Resources		Baseline information - Several useful information sources are available that highlight the current state of the environment in Northern Ireland at a regional level which could be referenced including the Northern Ireland Environmental Statistics Report the latest of which currently is dated May 2023. Northern Ireland Environmental Statistics Reports: https://www.daerani.gov.uk/articles/northern-ireland-environmental-statistics-report DAERA issued a consultation document on Significant Water Management Issues to inform the development of the third cycle River Basin Management Plan (2021-2027). This gives further consideration of the pressures and their sources on water quality in Northern Ireland Further details on this issue can be found at: Planning for the third cycle River Basin Management Plan 2021-2027 - Consultation on Significant Water Management Issues December 2019 Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (daerani.gov.uk). Also, with regard to Northern Ireland Baseline Information and Data Sources DAERA have two map viewers in relation to the aquatic environment that may be of use, Water Information Request Web Viewer and NIEA Catchment Data Map Viewer both of which can be found at: https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/daera-map-viewers Water Management Unit notes and welcomes the scope of the information contained in section 5.11 the evidence base relating to the water environment. Whilst noting the date of the Scoping Report it is important that the most up to date information available is used in the formulation of the Sustainability Appraisal.	The Environmental Statistics report has been used to inform the scoping baseline. Section 5.11.2 has been updated to include baseline information that has been published after 2019.
Water Resources		Mitigation Where adverse impacts on the aquatic environment are identified during the Sustainability Appraisal process, and the nature of those potential impacts clearly identified, relevant and appropriate mitigation measures should be proposed. Mitigation measures must be proportionate to those risks identified.	Comment noted. The SA will endeavour to set out clear conclusions and identify mitigation where relevant at this strategic level.
Water Resources		Monitoring : Monitoring regimes should be identified (including where feasible, consideration of the monitoring body, frequency of monitoring, appropriate analysis, and reporting) to ensure both the efficacy of those mitigation measures and identify any unforeseen impacts to the aquatic environment that may arise from implementation of	The SA Report will identify draft monitoring measures relevant to the Plan and these will form part of the overall consultation.

SA Topic	Date	Comments	How addressed
		the LDP. Monitoring should be subject to review at each reporting stage to reflect new data. The Sustainability Appraisal should contain a commitment to actions should the monitoring regime identify adverse impacts during plan implementation despite the mitigation measures proposed.	
Water Resources		Water Management Unit notes and welcomes that the scoping report recognises: • That it is essential that River Basin Management Plans are integrated with a wide range of strategies and initiatives impacting on the water environment in Northern Ireland • The importance of water and sewerage services in relation to the LDP • The benefits (both in terms of flood risk and water quality) of the use of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS).	No action required.
Housing / Water Resources	Marine Team	The Marine Plan team welcomes the proposed updates and provides the additional following comments: Chapter 5.3 and SA Objective: It is recommended the reference to 'balancing the needs of society and the environment' within the objective is widened to include that of the 'marine environment'. This includes the marine historic environment, marine natural environment, seascape and the marine water environment. It is noted the key issues and appraisal prompts for the housing objective make no reference to the potential environmental impact (including that on the marine area) of providing housing. Is this an oversight, given the environmental impacts in providing infrastructure with respect to water, waste and sewage?	Comment noted, however Sustainability Objective 3 will not be revised, as it is considered that 'the environment' is a term that already - encompasses all these areas. Objective 3 is a social objective, concerning the provision of housing. The environmental sustainability objectives (7-14) include relevant KSIs and appraisal prompts, including water, waste and sewage in 5.11.14.
Economy and Employment		Chapter 5.5 and SA Objective. It is recommended the Key Sustainability Issues section is updated to reflect a joined-up approach with the marine area, given its unique coastline. The coast should be drawn out in the last Key Sustainability Issue; "... a number of natural assets including its coastline which are particularly suited ...". However, it is suggested this is balanced with indicating the negative effects of this type of activity, if not sustainably managed. The objective for sustainable economic growth should include narrative on protecting natural assets, including those located around the coast; the need to balance sustainable economic growth with protection of the terrestrial and marine environments; and integration with the marine economy.	Comment noted, Sustainability Objective 5 has been revised to include sustainable locations for employment to reflect the need to balance provision with other sustainability pillars. Section 5.5 has also been updated to incorporate new baseline information and appraisal prompts have been updated.
Material Assets / Landscape		Chapter 5.6 and SA Objective: The preservation of seascape character should also be a constraint on wind energy development, within the Renewable	Title of Sustainability Objective 13 has been

SA Topic	Date	Comments	How addressed
and Seascape		Energy section. Under the Key Sustainability Issues, it is the marine area, rather than the coast, which could also support wave/tidal energy projects. The first issue should also be amended to ‘improving infrastructure across rural and coastal areas ...’ to recognise the coastal location of infrastructure. It is observed reference to sewage infrastructure and its effect on the marine area, is not included within the appraisal prompts, yet the capacity and availability of infrastructure with respect to water, waste and sewage is key to identifying the location of future housing and employment land is listed as a Key Sustainability Issue. Is this an oversight? It is suggested the SA Objective for material assets should be amended to include “in both the terrestrial and marine areas” at the end of the first sentence after adverse impacts. It is further recommended the additional text is included on the compatibility and/or integration of material assets across the terrestrial and marine areas.	updated to include seascape. Table 4.1 refers to the scope of each sustainability theme. Sewage infrastructure is fully considered under Objective 11. Sustainability Objective 6 will not be changed, it is not necessary to distinguish areas. Appraisal prompts have been updated to ensure effects on marine area are considered, where appropriate. Chapter has been updated to include crossovers with the draft Marine Plan.
Physical Resources / Landscape and Seascape / Water Resources		Chapter 5.7 and SA Objective: It is recommended that references to “landscape character” are amended to “landscape and seascape character”, to reflect the importance of the coast to the Borough. The coastal and marine locations of Earth Science and ASSIs should be highlighted. It would be helpful to highlight in the Key Sustainability Issues if any of the further thirteen sites of geological significance outside the AONB have a coastal or marine location. In this regard, the appraisal prompts for Earth Science features should be amended to ensure those within the coastal and marine area ‘can also be protected’ or ‘are unlikely to be protected’. It is suggested the SA Objective, should be amended to read “help to support the economy, when balanced against the protection of the terrestrial and marine environment”.	The scoping report has been revised to reference seascape and increase awareness of the seascape element in this Council. Sustainability Objective 7 will not be changed, as the term ‘sustainable’ used in the objective already encompasses this.
Air Quality		Chapter 5.9 and the SA Objective: The SA Objective should reflect that degradation from air pollution can also occur in the marine environment. It is suggested the objective is amended to “... degrading the natural environment, including the marine environment”, particularly in relation to any marine related sensitive receptors. The appraisal prompts should also be amended to reflect this.	Comment noted, however Sustainability Objective 9 will not be revised, as it is considered that ‘the natural environment’ is a term that already encompasses the marine environment.
Climate Change		Chapter 5:10 and SA Objective: The section should be updated in relation to the work of the Ministerial Coastal Forum. Given the extensive nature of the Borough’s coastline, it would be beneficial to refer to this within the SA Objective.	Comment noted. Sustainability Objective 10 has been revised. Reference to ‘the coast’ has not been added to the objective, as it is considered that this is already included in the

SA Topic	Date	Comments	How addressed
		The following text is suggested “managing the resilience of our society and natural environment, including the coast, to an uncertain future, ...” The third bullet of the Key Sustainability Issues should refer to “... flooding, coastal change, including coastal erosion, habitat loss, ...water pollution (urban, rural and marine)”. Coastal change refers to physical changes to the shoreline, for example erosion, coastal landslip, permanent inundation and coastal accretion. In addition, it is suggested the appraisal prompts are expanded upon to ensure consideration of coastal and marine effects, and specific prompts in relation to coastal erosion should be included. For example, “avoid/does not avoid risk of damage to developments in areas of high risk, vulnerability and probability to coastal erosion/coastal change”. Also, “does/does not cause or exacerbate flood or coastal erosion risk elsewhere”.	term ‘society and natural environment’. Appraisal prompts have been updated. KSI has been updated.
Water Resources		Chapter 5.11 and SA Objective: It is observed this chapter makes no reference to the UK Marine Strategy or its associated regulations. It is important those aspects of the UK Marine Strategy not addressed by Water Framework Regulations (WFD) are given consideration and included. The UK Marine Strategy sets out the framework for the achievement of good environmental status in our marine and coastal waters. Any issues drawn out from this should be highlighted within the Key Sustainability Issues, where appropriate. There are various points in the narrative of this chapter that refer to pollution problems at beaches, which should be widened to pollution problems in marine and coastal waters. It is suggested appraisal prompt (a) should be further expanded to “surface and ground water, including transitional, coastal and marine water bodies, to meet WFD and UK Marine Strategy objectives” and (h) “reduce quality of surface and ground water, including transitional, coastal and marine water bodies”. Prompt (i) should also be expanded to “fail to meet WFD and UK Marine Strategy water quality objectives”. It is assumed the reference to ‘aquatic food resources’ includes those in the marine area. Furthermore, it is recommended the SA Objective is updated to include reference to the UK Marine Strategy Regulations, particularly to ensure those elements not covered by WFD are included for consideration. It may be beneficial to ensure that references to water pollution and the physical state of the water environment, including pollution in the marine environment and the physical state of the marine water environment.	The SA has acknowledged the importance of reducing pollution and avoiding conflict with other plans, strategies and policies. Chapter 5.11 has been updated. Additional references have been included to the UK Marine Strategy. Prompts relating to improving water quality are relevant to both freshwater and marine waters.

SA Topic	Date	Comments	How addressed
Natural Resources		Chapter 5.12 and SA Objective: It is recommended the fourth sentence in the second paragraph to section 5.12.1 is deleted. The fifth sentence in the second paragraph in section 5.12.2 under Nature Conservation Sites should be amended to fully reflect the Council's legislative responsibilities with respect to effects and likely effects on the marine area. Under the Blue / Green Infrastructure section the third sentence should be amended to "... together across landscapes and seascapes." The risk of negative impacts on the natural heritage resources within the marine area should be acknowledged under section 5.12.3 Under Key Sustainability issues, it should be acknowledged that unregulated activities that affect or might affect Strangford Lough will need to be appropriately addressed through planning legislation, as well as the Marine Act. In addition, it is suggested reference should be made to 'nature-based solutions' in the issue referring to more sustainable defence and protection measures. The SA objective would benefit from ensuring the protection of biodiversity extends to both the terrestrial and marine areas.	Introduction to 5.12 has been reviewed in light of the UK exit from the EU. Noted –legal requirements and responsibilities already defined in law. As such they are outside the scope of assessing alternatives within a sustainability appraisal. Noted – we consider biodiversity is already an overarching term which encompasses all - no need to be specific.
Landscape and Seascape		Chapter 5.13 and SA Objective: Section 5.13.1 would benefit from drawing out the importance of coastal areas in terms of 'seascape' as well as landscape in paragraph 3; and as an asset for tourism and as a motivator to encourage people to invest in a home or new location in paragraph 4. It is observed Section 5.13.2 does not state that detailed information on seascapes has been provided in the LDP position paper. It should be stated the Strangford Lough AONB is also located in the marine area, not just council areas. NI suitability for wind energy under the Development Pressure section should also refer to the balance with seascape considerations. The threats and opportunities from development pressure on seascape character should be recognised alongside landscape character. Section 5.13.2 should refer to seascape value, local seascape character, negative impacts on seascape in areas particularly sensitive to change and opportunities to improve seascape, not just landscape. Under Key Sustainability Issues, seascape should be specifically mentioned in those bullets that refer to landscape. For example, the variety of seascape types across the borough should be highlighted in the second bullet; measures to protect the different landscapes and seascapes from visual intrusion in	Sustainability Objective 13 has been revised to "Landscape and Seascape" to increase awareness of the seascape element in this Council. Position paper comment not relevant; seascape character areas are included in the SA Scoping. Development pressure from renewables has been covered in 5.7. SA is a strategic assessment and the information in the Scoping Report is at a detail proportionate to that of the Plan. AND has commissioned an independent Landscape Character Review to inform its detailed evidence base for site-specific proposals.

SA Topic	Date	Comments	How addressed
		the third bullet; and landscape and seascape settings in the fifth bullet. An amendment of the headline SA Objective 13 to “maintain and enhance landscape and seascape character” would be welcomed. The reference to ‘seascapes’ within the detail of this objective is welcomed.	
Historic Environment and CH		Chapter 5.14: It is recommended that reference is also made to the coast in the first sentence of paragraph 3 of section 5.14.1. References to landscape character should be extended to include seascape character in the last paragraph, of this section. Reference to the incremental erosion of seascape character in section 5.14.3 should also be made in addition to landscape and townscape character. Under Key Sustainability Issues, seascape should be specifically mentioned in those bullets that refer to landscape. It is important the appraisal prompts include the marine historic environment (undesigned and designated heritage assets), particularly those in coastal locations. A4 – Review of Policies, Plans, Programmes and Strategies MPT welcome the inclusion of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, the UK Marine Policy Statement and the draft Marine Plan for Northern Ireland within the Sustainable Development Category. The Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013 should also be listed in this category, rather than the Cross-Cutting category. The following text, taken from the explanatory notes of the legislation, should be used in the Objectives / Requirements column. “The Marine Act establishes a new framework for the marine environment based on a strategic system of marine planning that would balance environmental, social and economic needs and therefore, contribute to the sustainable development of Northern Ireland’s marine waters. The Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013 builds on the provisions set out in the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 (the 2009 Act). It establishes a strategic system of marine planning in Northern Ireland’s inshore region (out to 12 nautical miles) that will be proactive, co-ordinated and responsive; assists in the delivery of a modernised licensing and enforcement regime that is streamlined, consistent and promotes integrated decision making; and contributes to the delivery of the United Kingdom’s aim of establishing an “ecologically coherent network of Marine Protected Areas”, so that marine biodiversity is protected and international and European commitments are met. It will contribute ultimately to the United Kingdom’s vision of clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse	Section 5.14 has been reviewed and updated.

SA Topic	Date	Comments	How addressed
		oceans and seas. Sustainable development is at the heart of the Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013. The Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006 places a duty on all public authorities in respect of sustainable development." The text "Section 58 of the MCAA 2009 and" should be deleted from the Implications column. The text "Section 8 of the Marine Act (NI 2013)" should be deleted from the Implications column under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. It is recommended the following is included in the Objectives/Requirements column. "The Act introduces a new system of marine management. This includes a new marine planning system, which makes provision for a statement of the Government's general policies, and the general policies of each of the devolved administrations, for the marine environment, and also for marine plans which will set out in more detail what is to happen in the different parts of the areas to which they relate, taking account of the Marine Policy Statement." The last sentence under the Implications for LDP under draft Marine Plan for Northern Ireland should be amended to "Public authorities must state their reasons if an authorisation or enforcement decision is not taken in accordance with any marine plan or the UK Marine Policy Statement.	
Appendix 4		The Planning in the Coastal Area document should be listed in the cross-cutting category rather than the climate change category. The reference to 'marine environment' in the first and last sentences of the Objectives / Requirements column and the last sentence of the Implications for LDP column should be amended to 'marine area'.	Appendix 4 updated
Appendix 4		An Integrated Coastal Zone Management Strategy should be listed in the cross-cutting category rather than the nature resources category. The Implications for LDP column for the Strategy should reference the LDPs policies and proposals interaction with marine spatial planning, commercial fisheries, aquaculture, climate change and coastal protection, water quality, tourism and recreation, renewable energy, ports and marine transport, coastal landscapes (seascapes), extractive industries as well as the natural and built heritage. The MPT welcome the inclusion of the Northern Ireland Seascape Character Assessment.	Appendix 4 updated
General		Other comments: Section 1.2 should refer to the Borough sharing a boundary with the marine area and the need to ensure the integration of marine and terrestrial planning and consistency between marine and terrestrial policy documents.	Section 1 updated
General		In Section 2.2 Principles, the reference to marine environment in the last sentence, should be amended to marine area. There is connectively not	Section 1 updated

SA Topic	Date	Comments	How addressed
		only with the marine environment but also with various marine sectors, uses and users – such as fishing, tourism and recreation, harbours etc.	
General		In Section 4.5 UK Marine Policy Statement and Marine Plan for NI, the third paragraph should state the draft Marine Plan for Northern Ireland is made up of two plans, one for the offshore region under the Marine and Coastal Access Act and one for the onshore region under the Marine Act (NI). The last paragraph should be amended to read “Section 58 (3) and (4) of the MCAA and Section 8 (3) of the Marine Act, require”. In addition, reference should be made to the legislative requirements of Section 58 and Section 8 (1), (2) and (4), in relation to authorisation and enforcement decisions which affect or might affect the whole or any part of the marine area	(should read section 4.3.5) Introductory section has been reviewed and updated – comments noted.
General	Marine Conservation Branch	Marine Conservation Branch Response Marine Conservation Branch welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Ards and North Down draft Plan Strategy, please find our comments below. Local Development Plan 2030 – Sustainability Appraisal – Scoping Report In Section 3.2, we welcome the following statement: ‘The LDP must also take account of the regional policy context set by the Northern Ireland Executive and Central Government Departments. This includes, amongst others, the sustainable Development Strategy, the RDS, the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) and Planning Policy Statements (PPSs), the UK Marine Policy Statement (UK MPS) and, when Published the Marine Plan for Northern Ireland.’ However, we advise that the Draft Marine Plan is currently a material consideration and therefore needs to be taken into account for all decisions which affect or might affect the marine area.	Policy issue, not a SA issue – introductory section has been reviewed and updated – comments noted.
Economy & Employment		In Section 5.5.4, we recommend considering the potential adverse impacts of coastal/marine tourism such as marine mammal disturbance, increase of marine litter and the potential to introduce and/or spread invasive non-native species.	Section 5.5.2 updated to include these issues.
Climate Change		In Section 5.10.2, we recommend also considering the potential impacts of ‘Coastal Squeeze’ with reference to the following policy lines regarding climate change, coastal erosion and coastal flooding: Marine UK Policy Statement Section 2.6.7.4 under Climate change adaption and mitigation states “Adapting to the impacts of climate change will also be a priority for terrestrial planning at the coast. Marine planning will need to be compatible with these impacts. This will include ensuring inappropriate types of development are not permitted in those areas most vulnerable to	Coastal squeeze has been added to 5.10. The UK Marine Policy Statement has been referenced in 5.10.1 but it is not proportionate to reference all listed policy sub-sections.

SA Topic	Date	Comments	How addressed
		coastal change, or to flooding from coastal waters, while also improving resilience of existing developments to long term climate change.” • Marine UK Policy Statement Section 2.6.8.4 “Marine plan authorities should be satisfied that activities and developments will themselves be resilient to risks of coastal change and flooding and will not have an unacceptable impact on coastal change. A precautionary and risk-based approach, in accordance with the sustainable development policies of the UK Administrations, should be taken in terms of understanding emerging evidence on coastal processes”. • Marine UK Policy Statement Section 2.6.8.5 “Marine plan authorities should consider existing terrestrial planning and management policies for coastal development under which inappropriate development should be avoided in areas of highest vulnerability to coastal change and flooding. Development will need to be safe over its planned lifetime and not cause or exacerbate flood and coastal erosion risk elsewhere.” – • Marine UK Policy Statement Section 2.6.8.6 “Account should be taken of the impacts of climate change throughout the operational life of a development including any decommissioning period. Marine plan authorities should not consider development which may affect areas at high risk and probability of coastal change unless the impacts upon it can be managed. Marine plan authorities should seek to minimise and mitigate any geomorphological changes that an activity or development will have on coastal processes, including sediment movement”. • The draft Marine Plan for Northern Ireland’s Core Policy on climate change states “public authorities, where appropriate, must consider the proposals ability to adapt to a changing climate.” • In relation to Climate Change Adaptation, the draft Marine Plan for Northern Ireland’s Core Policy states “Where climate change has the potential to impact on a proposal during its lifetime, a public authority may require the proposer to demonstrate: a) How the impact has been considered; and b) Measures to address the adverse impact, where appropriate.” • draft Marine Plan for Northern Ireland Paragraph 97 states “Public Authorities must	

SA Topic	Date	Comments	How addressed
		consider if any actions are necessary to adapt the proposal to a changing climate, through decision making processes.” • draft Marine Plan for Northern Ireland Paragraph 100 states: “Increased temperatures, sea level rise and extreme weather events increase the risk of coastal erosion and flooding and should be taken into account by proposers and public authorities. Proposals should be located and designed to cope with current and future conditions. Care needs to be taken to ensure proposals do not adversely impact on natural ecosystems”. • Section 3.13 of the SPPS states that “The planning system should therefore help to mitigate and adapt to climate change by ... avoiding development in areas with increased vulnerability to the effects of climate change, particularly areas at significant risk from flooding, landslip and coastal erosion and highly exposed sites at significant risk from impacts of storms”. • SPPS Section 6.33 states that “The RDS recognises that coastal areas need to be protected from coastal squeeze, to safeguard against loss of distinctive habitats, and to help adaption to climate change, and accordingly states the landscape setting of features should also be conserved”. This would be applicable to further development or hard sea defences at the coast. Those coasts already protected and/or developed have lost their ability to change in response to dynamic forcing, especially during storm events and to longer term natural changes in sediment supply and volume. At a time of sea level rise, the ability of a coastline to naturally adjust is important, and where possible, should not be prohibited.	
Natural Resources		In Section 5.12.2, we welcome Figure 5.12.1 and the consideration of ‘Ecosystem Services’.	No action required
Economy & Employment / Natural Resources		Summary of Proposed Scoping Report Updates ahead of DPS • In Section 5.5, we welcome the following statement: ‘Incorporate reference to relevant policy areas of draft Marine Plan in Section 5.5.1 (e.g. tourism and recreation, commercial fisheries, aquaculture, ports and shipping).’ • In section 5.6, we welcome the following statement: ‘Incorporate reference to relevant policy areas of draft Marine Plan in Section 5.6.1 (e.g. energy/telecoms).’ • In Section 5.10, we welcome the following statement: ‘Incorporate reference to relevant policy	Noted section 5.10/5.12 to be reviewed and additional/new info included.

SA Topic	Date	Comments	How addressed
		areas of draft Marine Plan in Section 5.10.1 (climate Change, coastal processes).’ • In Section 5.10, we recommend replacing the following statement ‘Update section on coastal erosion to include details of 2018 [Coastal Erosion] Baseline Study and Gap Analysis by DAERA and DFI’ with the following information: ‘DAERA has commissioned a Northern Ireland Historical Shoreline Analysis Survey (https://www.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=1d7bba4c40b541a486c874dee45c7046). The primary objective from this project was to acquire historical shoreline information for all of the Northern Ireland coastline. Having this detailed understanding of the coast’s shoreline position and geometry over annual to decadal time periods is essential in any management of the coast. The historical shoreline analysis was based on all available Ordnance Survey maps and aerial imagery information. Analysis looked at position and geometry over annual to decadal time periods, providing a dynamic picture of how the coastline has changed since the start of the early 1800s.’ • In Section 5.12, we welcome the following statements: -‘Review ‘review of Policies, Plans, Programmes and Strategies’ Section 6.12.1 to update the legislative framework (to include Wildlife order and WANE Act in respect of Conservation of Biodiversity.’ - ‘Review crossovers with UK MPS and draft Marine Plan themes e.g. Natural Heritage, land and sea interaction, invasive alien species and incorporate into 5.12.1.’ - ‘Add key sustainability issues: ‘Marine Planning and its associated obligations need to be appropriately considered within the Local Development Plan, particularly as previous plans and frameworks may not have referred to coastal or marine matters’ and ‘there is a statutory requirements of the Council to further the conservation of biodiversity in its functions.’ - ‘Add new appraisal prompts (f) and (i) to capture effects on marine ecosystems ‘supports (or adversely affects) the preservation and enhancement marine ecosystems and marine protected areas.’ In section 5.13, we welcome the following statement: ‘Consideration to be given to amending the Objective title to Landscape and Seascape’	
Appendix 4		PPP Extract for Ards and North Down We welcome the consideration of the listed policies however, recommend including the following: • Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 Attention is drawn to Article 10 of the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (as amended)	While the need to avoid adverse impacts on protected species is acknowledged, legal requirements and responsibilities are already defined in law

SA Topic	Date	Comments	How addressed
		under which it is an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb, capture, injure a Common seal (<i>Phoca vitulina</i>), Grey seal (<i>Halichoerus grypus</i>) or Basking shark (<i>Cetorhinus maximus</i>). In addition it is an offence to intentionally or recklessly, injure or kill a wild animal included in Schedule 5 of this Order. This includes Angel shark (<i>Squatina squatina</i>), Common skate (<i>Dipturus batis</i>), Short snouted seahorse (<i>Hippocampus hippocampus</i>), Spiny seahorse (<i>Hippocampus guttulatus</i>), Spiny lobster (<i>Palinurus elaphus</i>) and Fan mussel (<i>Atrina fragilis</i>). It is also an offence to intentionally or recklessly; • disturb any such animal while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for shelter or protection, • damage or destroy, or obstruct access to, any structure or place which any such animal uses for shelter or protection, • damages or destroys anything which conceals or protects any such structure; or • to have in possession or control any live or dead wild animal included in Schedule 5 or any part of, or anything derived from, such an animal.	and outside the scope of a sustainability appraisal.
Appendix 4		The Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 Attention is drawn to regulation 34 of The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended), which states that it is an offence to deliberately disturb, capture, injure or kill a wild animal of a European Protected Species included in Schedule 2 to these Regulations. This includes all species of dolphins, porpoises and whales and the marine turtle species. It is also an offence to; (a) deliberately obstruct access to a breeding site or resting place of such an animal. (b) damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of such an animal. (c) keep, transport, sell or exchange, or offer for sale or exchange, any live or dead wild animal of a European protected species, or any part of, or anything derived from, such an animal. Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (legislation.gov.uk) Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland 2015 Strategic Planning Policy Statement	While the need to avoid adverse impacts on European protected species is acknowledged, legal requirements and responsibilities are already defined in law and outside the scope of a sustainability appraisal.

SA Topic	Date	Comments	How addressed
Appendix 4		The Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 (Act) sets a target of an at least 100% reduction in net zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050 (i.e., net zero emissions by 2050) for Northern Ireland compared to baseline, along with interim targets including an at least 48% reduction in net emissions by 2030. https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/climate-change-act-northern-ireland-2022-key-elements#:~:text=Targets-.The%20Climate%20Change%20Act%20(Northern%20Ireland)%202022%20(Act),in%20net%20emissions%20by%202030.	5.10 has been updated to reflect changes in legislation, policy and baseline that have occurred since the POP was published.
		DAERA Marine Map Viewer	
Biodiversity		We advise considering the new Northern Ireland Priority Species List https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/list-northern-ireland-priority-species-2023 Please contact the SEA Team at seateam@daera-ni.gov.uk should you have any queries or require clarification.	SA is a strategic assessment and the information in the Scoping Report is at a detail proportionate to that of the Plan. Where applicable, site-specific information will be considered at the next stage, the LPP.
Water Resources	DAERA Inland Fisheries 27/02/24	Inland Fisheries has considered the documents provided and welcomes the inclusion of the following policies – Draft 3rd Cycle River Basin Management Plan: For the North Western, Neagh Bann and North Eastern River Basin Districts (2021 – 2027) Eel management plan: North Eastern River Basin District North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation (NASCO) Commission Convention For The Conservation Of Salmon In The North Atlantic Ocean and the Commission Precautionary Approach Agreement Given that the documents supplied for consideration refer to those listed above and fisheries interests within the borough and the potential impacts to them from the plans, e.g., fish passage (barriers), habitat quality, water quality and abstractions, Inland Fisheries would recommend the inclusion of the Fisheries Act (NI) 1966 as amended along with them. Several sections of the Act will have significant influence on what is permissible in relation to the above topics and should be taken into account when developing and measuring the impacts from such policies.	The Fisheries Act has been added to the Legislation section of the PPP.
Historic Environment	DfC: HED 07/08/2018	<u>Historic Environment</u> HED note and welcome the inclusion of Historic Environment issues as a heading in your scoping template document and in Strategic Objective 14. We have attached at this link our Guidance on Sustainability Appraisal and strategic Environmental	Noted. Historic Environment and Cultural Heritage has been expanded to reflect this input.

SA Topic	Date	Comments	How addressed
		Assessment for the Historic Environment. https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/communities-heritage-guidance-on-sustainability-appraisal-and-strategic-environmental-assessment-for-the-historic-environment.pdf We welcome the use of the term "Historic Environment" which encompasses the wide suite of heritage assets that needs to be considered as part of your evidence bases. The National Monuments and Buildings Record for Northern Ireland contains a primary repository for information on the historic environment and HED encourage local authorities to utilize this resource in LDP preparation. We would highlight the following GIS spatial data evidence bases which are critical for use in your scoping exercise. The attached link https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/historic-environment-digital-datasets makes available spatial evidence on a wide variety of heritage assets, including scheduled monuments, afforded statutory protection under the Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects (NI) Order 1995 and Listed Buildings, afforded protection under Article 80 of The Planning Act (NI) 2011. Further datasets are available on the Sites and Monuments Record, Industrial Heritage, Historic Parks Gardens and Demesnes, Battlesites, Defence Heritage, ASAs and AAPs. Please ensure to recheck our datasets to download up to date versions as they are subject to change as new assets are designated or recognised. GIS spatial datasets on the marine historic environment, can be requested from Rory McNeary, rory.mcneary@daera-ni.gov.uk <u>The Gazetteer of Nucleated Historic Settlements.</u> Information on request from HED. This is the result of a programme of work undertaken by HED to identify historic settlement centres and from these in some cases, areas of archaeological potential, identifying new ones and potentially modifying others. While the zones are in draft it will nonetheless be a useful tool going forward in the LDP process. We will in due course supply some text in relation to each zone identified and the history of the settlement. This draft map https://dfcgis.maps.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?webmap=1cb71d4c9f284cbab0367d032fb15ef7 also allows you to view draft candidate ASAI in your Borough. Historic Ordnance Survey Mapping. HED highlight the many other sites of heritage interest in your district, which are not yet listed in our records. These	Noted. Noted. Information from this record is summarised in section 5.14.2. It is not considered proportionate to include very detailed information at this strategic stage of LDP. It will inform spatial considerations at PS/LPP stage. Information on marine and submerged archaeology has been sourced from DAERA and included. Information from the gazetteer has been included in section 5.14.2. This has been noted. It is not considered proportionate to include very detailed information

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		include historic boundaries such as townland and parish boundaries and some later historic cemeteries, and the boundary patterns and route ways which have defined landscape character. Historic mapping is also a useful evidence base toward understanding the evolution of settlements. HED have consulted the Historic Monuments Council on the identification of an Area of Significant Archaeological Interest (ASAI) in relation to Nendrum monastery. The Statement of Significance for this area will be forwarded to you separately from this response letter. The evidence used in populating your scoping report should cross reference to assessments and LDP documentation which your Council area has already prepared (e.g. countryside assessment). The report should identify key characteristics of the historic environment and also demonstrate consideration, understanding and awareness of international conventions, as well as local legislation and policies which provide protection for the historic environment in Northern Ireland. Publications that may be of particular worth in the preparation of your LDP would be the published "Archaeological Survey of County Down" and "Strangford Lough -An archaeological survey of the maritime cultural landscape". <u>Plans Policies and Programmes</u> It is important to recognize that the legislative and policy provision for the historic environment in Northern Ireland enables us to meet our obligations in relation to international conventions in respect of heritage. International level: ■ The European Convention on the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe (Granada Convention) ■ The X'ian Declaration ■ The European Landscape Convention (this applies to the historic as well as the natural environment) ■ The European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (Valletta, 1992) Regional/Northern Ireland wide level: ■ The Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects (NI) Order 1995 ■ Class Consents Order (NI) 2001 – Supplementary to above ■ The Protection of Wrecks Act 1973 ■ The Planning Act (NI) 2011 ■ The Planning (Listed Buildings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 ■ Regional Development Strategy 2035 ■ Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS)	at this strategic stage of LDP. The candidate ASAI at Nendrum has been recognised in the scoping. Noted. Any documents not easily available to SES, will be addressed at PS. Noted. Appendix 4 contains all relevant plans, policies, programmes and strategies (PPP). This is continuously updated.

SA Topic	Date	Comments	How addressed
		- Planning Policy Statement 6 Planning Archaeology and The Built Heritage (and addendum and annex documents) - Planning Policy Statement 9 The Enforcement of Planning Control - Planning Policy Statement 21 Sustainable Development in the Countryside (Page 125) - Planning Policy Statement 23 Enabling development for the Conservation of Significant Places - The Protocol for the Care of the Government Historic Estate - Regeneration: The Value of our Built Heritage. Position Paper 2017 - A Study of the Economic Value of Northern Ireland's Historic Environment - Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland (Page 126) - Regeneration: The Value of our Built Heritage. Position Paper 2017 - A Design Guide for Rural Northern Ireland - British Standard BS 7913:2013 Guide to the conservation of historic buildings Local Level: - Existing local development plans. - Building on Tradition – A Sustainable Design Guide for the Northern Ireland Countryside - Creating Places – Achieving quality in residential developments' - Any existing Conservation Management Plans for assets in the area (e.g. recent publicity suggests that one is forthcoming for the Market Cross in Newtownards.) - Conservation Area Character Appraisals. - Design Guides for Areas of Townscape Character HED advise that the policy protection provided through the policies in SPPS, which is descended in part from the policies in PPS6, has a proven track record of compliance with International Conventions on the protection of the historic environment (to which the UK is a signatory), and that the wording, distinctiveness and hierarchy of policies in respect of the historic environment in SPPS is important. We would welcome retention of these policies, which work well, and supplementary policy which could address policy gaps. HED highlight the importance of recognizing the relationship of the historic environment to other headings and objectives, including, among others, health and wellbeing, education and economic growth (e.g. tourism), and sustainable use of physical resources. environmental benefits. We highlight that there are a very large number of strategic heritage assets in your area, dating from	Noted. All topics are cross-referenced in the <i>Baseline Information</i> section of each topic in Section 5 of the Scoping Report. Noted.

SA Topic	Date	Comments	How addressed
		Mesolithic period through to World War 2. Highlights include many State Care Monuments, which include tower houses, churches and abbeys, Scrabo Tower and Ballycopeland windmill, listed buildings and registered gardens such as Mount Stewart, and also a huge corpus of scheduled and undesignated monuments reflecting human interactions through the ages with the landscape. Many assets have developed an iconic role in being identified with place. The area is extremely rich in its maritime heritage and several of the settlement patterns have their origins in the medieval period. In particular HED are working to enhance the heritage offering and community value of Kirkistown Castle, and to reinforce its contribution to the origins and evolution of the settlement. We consider it important that this site enhancing its heritage value and tourism potential. We stress the opportunity that the LDP presents toward realising the potential of the historic environment in your district, for economic, social and health and environmental benefits. <u>Appraisal Prompts</u> HED advises on the importance of appropriate and relevant Appraisal Prompts toward accurately accessing impacts on the historic environment. Relevant sustainability issues to consider for the historic environment in your area include: ■ Heritage assets at risk from neglect or decay or development pressure. ■ Areas where there is a risk of significant loss or erosion of landscape or townscape character or quality, or where development might have a significant impact on the historic environment and/or peoples enjoyment of it. ■ Traffic pollution. ■ Conserving and enhancing designated and non-designated assets and their settings. ■ Heritage Crime. ■ Inappropriate development/enhancement/design which does not demonstrate an informed understanding of heritage assets and their settings (e.g. through having conducted adequate assessments or compiling conservation management plans or though having used inappropriate materials). ■ Certain types of permitted development. ■ The effects of coastal erosion on heritage assets ■ Demolition or loss of heritage assets, prior to them being protected Opportunities include ■ Heritage led development, and supporting vitality of historic town centres.	Noted. At this stage of the LDP process, <i>Appraisal Prompts</i> have been written at a generic and strategic level to aid discussion in the appraisals.

SA Topic	Date	Comments	How addressed
		- Developing or maintaining a sense of place by informing design based on historic environment evidence. - Promoting innovative use of existing historic listed and non-listed building stock. - Heritage based tourism and promoting awareness involvement and understanding of the historic environment. - Encouraging and nurturing traditional skills and using the historic environment as an educational resource. - Removal of buildings from the Buildings at Risk (BARNI) register. - The creation of more Conservation Areas, Areas of Townscape Character and Areas of Village Character. <u>Monitoring</u> Effective monitoring strategies will be an important component of a robust SA/SEA. In relation to monitoring effects HED stress the importance of having meaningful indicators in order measure these. Examples of useful methods of monitoring effects of a plan or programme on the historic environment might include: - the number of Scheduled Monument Consents related to planning applications, - the number of Conservation Areas and/or Areas of Townscape Character designated or removed - the number of non-designated heritage (in CA, ATC or the countryside) assets re-used/enhanced, demolished or replaced and - planning decisions which overturn consultations advice/recommendations throughout the Plan period, - the number of planning conditions that have had archaeological conditions attached. HED advise that we maintain an independent role in relation to the drafting of LDPs and emphasise the importance of authorities being able to demonstrate how they have utilized the evidence on the historic environment in characterizing their landscape, and in considering zonings for development and forms of mitigation such as appropriate designation or key site requirements. We look forward to continuing to work with you in the preparation of your LDP.	Noted. Noted. Noted.