



Derry City & Strabane
District Council
Comhairle
Chathair Dhoire &
Cheantar an tSratha Báin
Derry Cittie & Strábane
Deistrick Cooncil



4th April 2017 Stakeholder Event - Natural Environment & Landscape Briefing

Natural Heritage Background:

The richness of our natural heritage, both in terms of landscape, natural environments and biodiversity across the Derry City and Strabane District is **recognised in the significant number of international and regionally designated important sites**. At many levels, development can potentially adversely impact on our environment - both terrestrial and marine. Accordingly, it is incumbent on all those involved in the planning process to ensure that any potential environmental impacts, whatever their scale, are identified to enable potential effects to be considered, avoided or mitigated for.

The following statutory framework seeks to ensure that in future when preparing its Local Development Plan (LDP), the Council will take full account of the implications of proposed land use zonings, locations for development and settlement limits on natural heritage features within or adjoining the plan area. Positive measures to develop 'blue and green infrastructure' and enhance biodiversity will also be considered.

- **European Legislation & International Conventions**
- **European Designations / International Conventions**
- **National Legislation**
- **Regional Planning Policy**
- **Current Area Plans**
- **Biodiversity Action Plan**

This will require Council to take full account of all proposed land use zonings and potential developments on natural heritage features / priority habitats / species:

- Within the LDP area.
- In adjacent Member States; and
- On our marine environment.

Our District possesses:

- 1 International (RAMSAR) site,
- 6 European (SPA's / SAC's) designated sites,
- 16 ASSI's,
- 3 National Nature Reserves,
- 4 Local Nature Reserves,
- 7 Areas of Local Nature Conservation and Amenity Importance (defined within the DAP2011)

Landscape:

Our District's landscape provides a rich resource of productive agricultural land, settlements, sites for nature conservation and archaeological and historical features. It also provides for many recreational needs and has the potential to become an increasingly important tourist asset. Landscapes of national importance have merited designations as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). A significant part of the **Sperrin AONB** (re-designated / extended in 2008) lies within the District. Relevant Landscape documents for the LDP are the **Northern Ireland Landscape Character Assessment (NILCA / ERM Study, 1999-2000)**. Recently, the more strategic Northern Ireland Regional Landscape Character Assessment (NIRLCA) Draft Report was published in 2015 and adopted in 2016.

Rivers:

Derry District has 3 rivers that enter Lough Foyle – **Foyle, Faughan and Muff**. The Foyle and Faughan rivers are particularly significant, because they support Atlantic salmon, brown trout and sea trout. Strabane District has several rivers, which flow to the River Foyle. The River Foyle constitutes the focus of the Lower

Foyle Catchment, as it flows from its confluence of rivers Mourne and Finn to Derry. **Burn Dennet, Glenelly, Owenkillev and Glenmornan** rise in the Sperrins and flow west to the River Foyle. The **River Derg** drains the SW of the District, whilst the **River Finn** rises in Co. Donegal and flows east to Strabane to join with the River Mourne.

Marine:

In recent years, legislation has been introduced to ensure that for the first time, marine activities and resources within our marine waters are planned and managed in a coherent manner. **The UK Marine Policy Statement (MPS) 2011** is the framework for preparing Marine Plans and taking decisions affecting the marine environment.

LDP Obligations:

The Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 now places a statutory duty on those planning authorities producing a LDP to undertake a **Sustainability Appraisal (SA)**. This incorporates the principles of sustainable development when preparing such plans and assesses not just the potential environmental impacts of the plan but any economic and social impacts as well.

To assess the environmental implications, the SA will incorporate a **Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)**. The objective of SEA is to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental consideration into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development.

Under the provisions of the **Habitats Regulations**, plan-making authorities are required to undertake an Appropriate Assessment for any development plan (or development proposal) which either individually, or in combination with other plans or projects, is likely to significantly affect a European Site such as a SPA or SAC

Policy Review & Options:

The existing policies within **PPS 2** are felt to be largely effective. That said, there is some scope to tailor specific policies to take account of local circumstances, such would be the case with the NH 6 (AONB).

Key District Natural Heritage issues:

- **Protection of our European / International sites / designated sites;**
- **Climate change / Invasive species;**
- **Biodiversity enhancement;**
- **Eco-tourism.**

What are your key issues? – please add any LDP relevant issues to this list.

Possible LDP Options?

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Natural Environmental	Existing designated areas / sites / species are identified / protected and biodiversity enhanced, with Policies as per SPPS	In addition, identify / Protect additional areas / sites / species of Local value and protect accordingly.	Identify/Protect minimum no of areas / sites / species. Protect these very best sites, accommodating development elsewhere

Landscape Character	Accept the existing (validated / updated) Landscape Character Areas and their Sensitivities, permitting further development accordingly.	Identify additional areas of Development Pressure and Higher Sensitivity in the landscape and constrain further development accordingly.	Identify/Protect minimum no of areas. Accommodate reasonably acceptable growth / development where possible.
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See Questions on screen re: a) Key Planning Issues, b) LDP Proposals, c) LDP Policies and d) Possible Options

Prompts for Table to discuss:

- What would be your Natural Heritage vision for this District?
- In Planning terms, what are the most pertinent issues affecting your area of interest?;
- In Planning terms, what are the most pertinent issues affecting Natural Heritage in our District?;
- How could these be sustainably improved in the forthcoming LDP?;
- Do you consider that the current statutory protection is adequate?
- Do you consider that the current planning policies are generally adequate – if not, how do you suggest we could improve them?
- How would additional rural housing, renewable energy proposals, etc. impact on our natural heritage?
- Should we have ‘Sensitive’ Policy Areas to protect those areas of our landscape under most pressure?
- Should we seeking more from developers in terms of local biodiversity - appropriate planting, habitat creation, green / blue infrastructure etc. as part of proposed developments?