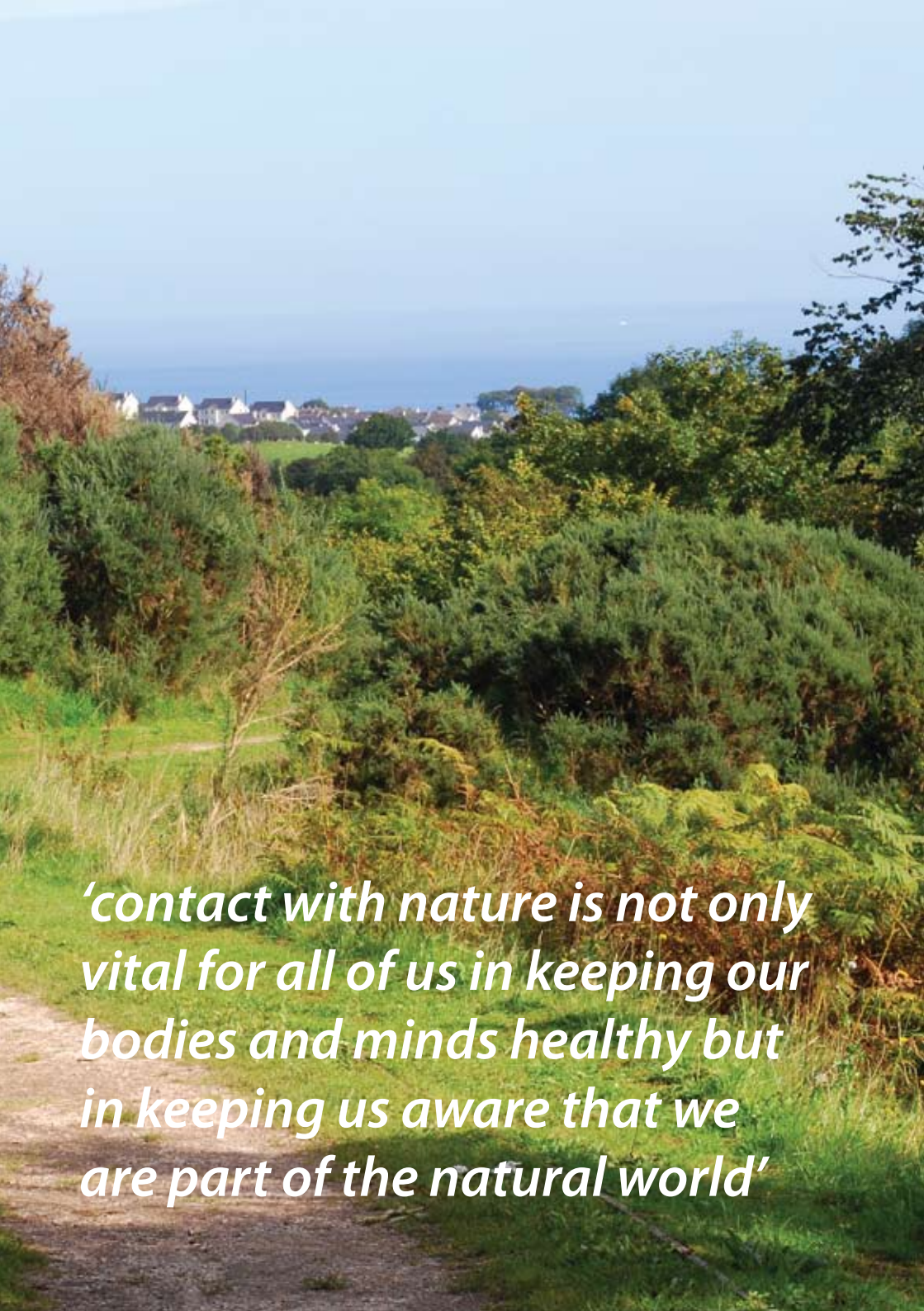


# Local Nature Reserves in Northern Ireland

A Guide to their Selection and Declaration







*'contact with nature is not only vital for all of us in keeping our bodies and minds healthy but in keeping us aware that we are part of the natural world'*

# Foreword

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Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) are well named. They are local areas where nature, wildlife and landforms are protected and where people can visit and enjoy contact with the natural world.

Increasingly, more and more of us are living in towns and cities. Even if we live in the countryside, many of us still spend a lot of time indoors. In our comfortably heated homes with our televisions and computers and with our cars and other sophisticated transport networks, it is easy for us to lose touch with nature and the natural rhythms of life. Worse still, without this contact with nature we can begin to think that the natural world has no relevance to our everyday lives.

The more time we spend outdoors in natural surroundings, the more we notice and stay in touch with the natural cycles of life such as the seasons, the weather, the tides and the phases of the moon. We see how the land is formed and how it interacts with the sea; beaches, cliffs, sand dunes, hills, valleys and mountains. We notice the arrival of

spring with its increasing bird song, the leaves appearing on the trees and the first buzzing of insects. We adjust as summer gradually gives way to autumn with its fruits, berries and the falling leaves. Most importantly of all, we come to enjoy more and more the beauty and richness of the natural world.

This contact with nature is not only vital for all of us in keeping our bodies and minds healthy but in keeping us aware that we are part of the natural world and not somehow divorced from it. Unless as a society we manage our development in a sustainable way and in harmony with nature, we will run into difficulties. We need this reference point of our natural world to help us steer a sustainable future for ourselves and for our children.

LNRs have a particularly important role to play in ensuring this everyday contact with nature. Their localness is their strong point. Ideally, there should be a LNR within easy and sustainable travelling distance of everyone in Northern Ireland, no matter where they live. I and all the members of the Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside (CNCC) would like to see this happen.

At the present time, the number of LNRs in Northern Ireland is small but the appointment of local biodiversity officers in district councils is beginning to bear fruit. For councils, LNRs are a very effective and practical way of demonstrating how they are helping to conserve local wildlife areas, raising awareness of biodiversity in their council area and making it accessible for local people to enjoy and appreciate.

I therefore commend this LNR guidance booklet to councils and partners and I hope it will prove to be a useful aid in helping them to work more easily through the declaration process. More importantly, I hope it will encourage them and others involved to declare many more LNRs throughout Northern Ireland and to ensure their effective management for the benefit of local people. CNCC, in our consultative and advisory role, will do all we can to encourage and promote such activities and we look forward to working with our many partners in achieving this goal.

*Chairman, Council for Nature  
Conservation and the Countryside  
(CNCC)*



*Mr Patrick Casement  
March 2011*



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# 1. Introduction

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The purpose of this guidance document is to encourage district councils to establish more Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) in Northern Ireland as a means of both conserving and raising awareness of local biodiversity while making it accessible to the public.

The document provides practical help to those wishing to declare a LNR in their council area. It describes what LNRs are, how to select candidate sites, how to obtain council approval for declaration and the consultation process with the Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside (CNCC). Advice is also offered on the subsequent management of sites.

The guidance is written for Northern Ireland but draws on experience from throughout the UK, particularly that developed and published in January 1998 by the Urban Forum of the UK Man and the Biosphere Committee (Local Nature Reserves – A Time for Reflection: a time for new action).

## 2. What are Local Nature Reserves?

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### 2.1 Definition of a Local Nature Reserve

A “nature reserve” is defined under Article 2 of the 1985 Order as follows:

#### Article 2 of The Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Northern Ireland) Order 1985

1

##### *Interpretation*

*“nature reserve” means any area reserved, managed and used for the purpose of –*

- (a) conserving flora, fauna or features of geological, physiographical or other scientific or special interest therein or*
- (b) providing, under suitable conditions and control, special opportunities for the study of, and research into, matters relating to flora and fauna and the physical conditions in which they live, or for the study of features of geological, physiographical or other scientific or special interest therein;*

*Or for both of those purposes;*

Article 22 of the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 gives district councils the power to acquire, declare and manage Local Nature Reserves (LNRs). There is no actual definition of a “Local” Nature Reserve (LNR) contained in the legislation. The term ‘nature reserves’ is used in the Order but throughout the UK, nature reserves declared by local authorities, have come to be known as Local Nature Reserves.

Article 22 of the Order (Box 2 below) provides the legislative basis which gives district councils the power to establish nature reserves:

## Article 22 of The Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Northern Ireland) Order 1985

# 2

### *Powers of district councils*

- (1) *A district council may provide nature reserves on any land in its district (not being land held by, or the subject of an agreement or covenant entered into by the Department, under this Part), where it appears to the council expedient that the land should be managed for such purposes.*
- (2) *A district council may acquire land by agreement for the purposes of paragraph (1).*
- (3) *Where a district council provides a nature reserve under paragraph (1), the council may make byelaws for the protection of the nature reserve, and paragraph (2) and (3) of Article 19 shall have effect in relation to byelaws made under this paragraph as if for reference to the Department there were substituted references to a district council.*
- (4) *District councils shall exercise their functions under this Article in consultation with the Committee for Nature Conservation.*
- (5) *In this Article the expression "provide" shall be construed in accordance with Section 147 (a) of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972.*

Based on these legal definitions and evolving good practice throughout the UK, the working definition of a LNR is;

*"A Local Nature Reserve (LNR) is an area of land, designated by a district council, to conserve its nature conservation, earth science and recreational value, with the primary land use being for conservation purposes".*

## 2.2 What makes a good LNR?

A good LNR should ideally make a contribution to nature and/or earth science conservation, environmental education, community involvement and the enjoyment of nature by the general public. However, the emphasis on each of these aspects will vary, depending on the character of the individual site. Based on good practice elsewhere in the UK, NIEA recommends that LNRs should as far as possible make a contribution to public enjoyment and community involvement.

If the LNR is convenient to a centre of population and is easily accessible by public transport, then so much the better. Ideally, it should also provide for good public access although this might need to be restricted to some degree in order to maintain the wildlife and/or earth science value. LNR sites that link into public rights of way or other formal access routes may be particularly valuable,



Lagan Meadows LNR

especially if the site is also capable of providing an educational resource or experience without degrading its value for biodiversity/geodiversity.

However, where access or countryside recreation is the primary objective of a site as opposed to the conservation of nature, it may be better developed as a Country Park or similar. This would not preclude the latter having a LNR located within part of it where nature conservation would be the primary land use.

Most importantly, a good LNR is one which is actively managed. Management should be discussed with all those who have a stake in it e.g. local residents, local wildlife groups, voluntary nature conservation organisations and so on.

A local management group may provide a useful forum for this.





## 3. Why declare LNRs?

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### 3.1. The contribution of LNRs to biodiversity conservation

LNRs have specific mention in Objective 16 of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. This stresses the importance of safeguarding not only rare species and habitats but also more common, locally valued ones.

The Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy (NIBS) (August 2002), stresses the importance of local action in delivering its objectives and identifies councils as having a lead role to play in involving local communities in biodiversity conservation.

In tandem with the Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) process, the declaration of LNRs is an opportunity for councils to make a positive commitment to biodiversity and geodiversity conservation.

National biodiversity priorities, e.g. sites designated as Natura 2000 under the Habitats Directive 1992 and the Birds Directive 1979, Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs) and sites supporting priority habitats and species may be included when identifying potential LNRs in the LBAP process. However, the emphasis is normally on safeguarding diverse, distinctive and representative areas of local natural heritage interest and value. Ideally a suite of LNRs in a council area should contain the best representative examples of the main habitat types for the locality.

## 3.2. The contribution of LNRs to Sustainable Development

Government in Northern Ireland is committed to sustainable development and the encouragement of society to act in a more sustainable way. A key way of engendering this approach is to enable people to understand and appreciate more fully the way in which the natural environment works. People are more likely to become aware of and to value and enjoy the natural environment when they are able to experience it at first hand. LNRs provide an ideal opportunity for people to experience, understand and learn about the value of their natural heritage in a local context.

LNRs have an important part to play in terms of improving the quality of life for local people and have potential for health benefits, both physical and mental. They are also important in providing opportunities for biodiversity education, enjoyment and recreation and in attracting visitors to an area. Local community involvement in the management of LNRs can also help social cohesion and can form a proactive element in implementing Local Agenda 21 (LA21).



Washing Bay LNR





## 4. How do you declare an LNR?

### 4.1 The legal context

Article 22 of the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (Box 2, Page 4) gives district councils the power to acquire, declare and manage nature reserves. Paragraph 4 of this Article further states that that “district councils shall exercise their functions under this Article in consultation with the Committee for Nature Conservation”, (now the Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside (CNCC)).

The power to declare LNRs therefore lies solely with district councils but there is a requirement to consult with CNCC during the process.



Daisy Hill Wood LNR

## 4.2 Site selection

The first step in the process is the identification of a potential site. It is likely that some of these sites might initially be identified by local wildlife enthusiasts, a local community group or a voluntary conservation body. Sites of nature conservation or geodiversity value may already be designated as ASSIs or identified as Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCIs) in Area Plans but not necessarily so. If a Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) is being developed for the council area, potential LNRs may be identified and prioritised through that process. We recommend that NIEA should be involved at an early stage in the process and we will endeavour to work with councils and their partners to ensure that the consultation process with CNCC is carried out as efficiently as possible. NIEA can also contribute by providing survey information where it exists and advising on practical management aspects.

It is recommended that potential sites for LNR status should meet the criteria set out in Box 3 below:

Sites for consideration as LNRs should be:

3

- (1) Of high natural heritage and/or earth sciences interest/value in the local context.

(For example a local site in the ownership of a district council or leased under an agreement with the owner or tenant, which already carries a designation as an Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) or a Site of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCI), can be declared a LNR)

or

- (2) Of moderate natural heritage/earth sciences interest/value locally and high value for environmental education or research.

or

- (3) Of moderate natural interest/earth sciences interest/value and of high value in the district council area for the informal enjoyment of nature by the public.

or

- (4) Any combination of 1-3.

and

- (5) Capable of being managed for the conservation of nature/earth sciences and/or the maintenance of special opportunities for study or research as a priority concern.

### 4.3 Size and setting of the proposed site

The question of minimum size of a LNR is sometimes raised, particularly in urban areas. The simple answer is the bigger the better but small is possible. Large sites are usually more cost-effective to manage than small ones. They are much more likely to be able to accept multiple uses without damage and without different activities intruding upon one another. Sites of less than 2 hectares are unlikely to be suitable for multiple uses and there is also the possibility of management problems permeating small sites e.g. edge-effects and small unstable populations of species. Having said that, sites of earth science interest that are quite small may still merit declaration and be suitable for educational use.

It is important to take into account adjacent land uses and the degree of isolation or connectivity from other sites of wildlife value. In an urban context, LNRs are best seen as nodes in multi-functional green networks. For example, a LNR located along a recognised wildlife corridor may have the potential to act as stepping stone habitat for mobile species and can thus provide a vital and stable link between other important sites. The size of potential LNR sites such as this can be considerably smaller because of the added value that they provide for biodiversity conservation over a much wider area.

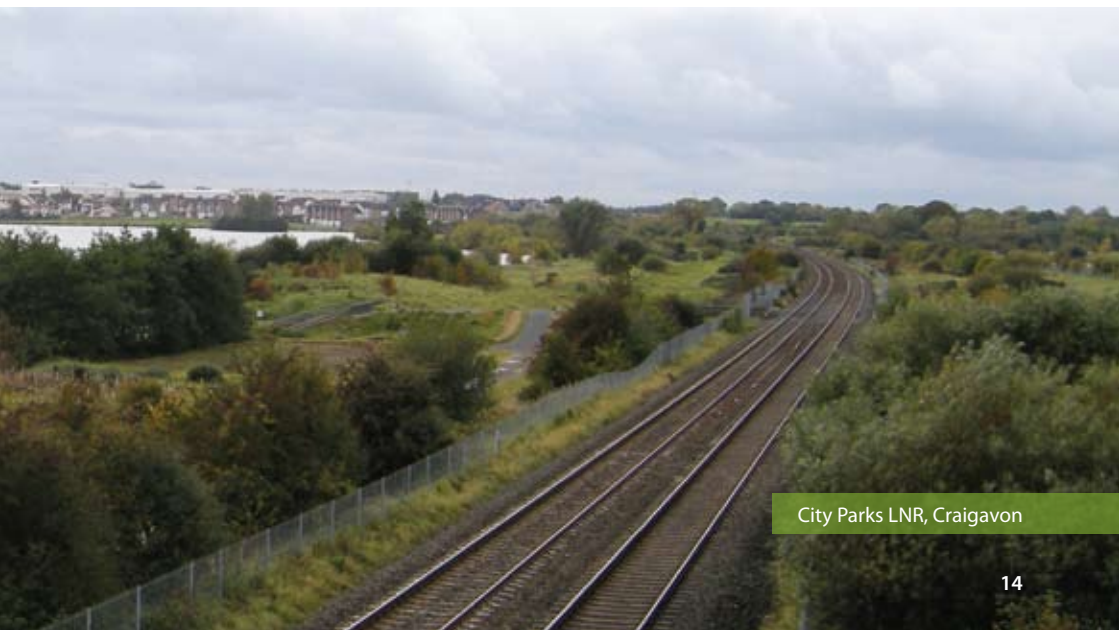
Outdoor recreation facilities can sometimes co-exist very well with LNRs in urban and rural areas. Grass sports pitches, golf driving ranges and more formal



access areas such as parks can be complementary to LNRs by providing recreational and access opportunities not appropriate to the latter, while providing general ecosystem services and additional feeding and roosting areas for some bird, insect and mammal species. The Bog Meadows LNR in Belfast demonstrates this complimentary use very well, as does Lagan Meadows on the urban fringe.

## 4.4 Ownership

Article 22 of the 1985 Order (Box 2, Page 4) sets out the powers of district councils to declare LNRs. It is clear from the legislation that ‘any land in its district’ means the area over which the district council has responsibility. With regard to ownership, the district council’s powers to “provide” nature reserves on any land in its district are detailed in section 147(a) of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972. This gives wide ranging powers to district councils to enter into whatever agreements they wish in accordance with the legislation. Thus, councils can make whatever arrangements/agreements in respect of crown land, statutory bodies and with non-governmental organisations as they see fit, if the latter wish to see their reserves officially recognised as LNRs. However, the 1985 Order does not allow for the declaration of an LNR on land which is already a National Nature Reserve (NNR). On the other hand, there is no reason why a LNR cannot be declared by a district council on land which is already designated as an ASSI, providing all other considerations are in place.



City Parks LNR, Craigavon

## 4.5 District Council consideration for LNR declaration

Article 22 of the 1985 Order (Box 2, Page 4) uses the term 'provide' nature reserves and does not set out a formal declaration process for councils to follow. It is thus for the latter to decide what processes they wish to adopt to formally declare LNRs.

Once a candidate LNR has been identified for consideration, the relevant district council official will normally complete such procedures as are deemed necessary to progress the matter. It is likely these may include such matters as consultation with stakeholders, agreement on the proposed boundary, management and any other issues identified which are judged by the council to be pertinent.

It has been the normal practice for LNRs so far declared in Northern Ireland that council approval is obtained for the declaration either from a full council or a relevant committee meeting before consultation with CNCC is sought.

If and when the declaration proposal then receives the endorsement of CNCC, it is a matter again for a council to adopt any process it so wishes to formally declare the LNR. Thus for example, they may wish to formalise the process of declaration by means of a public notice. The Scottish LNR Guidance contains an example of a declaration and public notice but it should be noted that the underpinning legislation is different to that pertaining in Northern Ireland. Care should therefore be taken not to introduce any elements which are not underpinned by the legislation applying here.

## 4.6 Consultation with CNCC

Once the district council has approved the candidate LNR site for declaration, formal consultation with CNCC can begin. This consultation will be facilitated by NIEA. Since it will normally have worked in partnership with the council to bring the proposal to this stage, the consultation will be supported by information researched and gathered by both parties.

NIEA will undertake to table candidate LNR declarations for consultation as soon as possible after they are received. The consultation will normally take the form of presenting relevant information to CNCC as set out in Appendix 1. The endorsement and any conditions and/or recommendations will be recorded in the minute of the meeting and by a formal letter to the council involved. In cases where the CNCC do not feel it is in a position to endorse a proposal, it will give reasons why not and the council will be free to consult again should it wish to do so.







## 5. Management of LNRs

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### 5.1. Management guidance

In declaring a LNR, a district council accepts the responsibility to ensure that the primary land use for the site is one of biodiversity and/or geodiversity conservation. Where, in line with the legislation, the original purpose of LNR declaration is to give special opportunities for study or research, then the maintenance or improvement of these opportunities should be a main aim. Balancing the obligations and often multiple aims in a LNR is best dealt with through the production of a management plan. This should be concise and designed to achieve the overall conservation aim while fulfilling objectives for educational use, recreation, visitor management and access and other related issues. It should also enable the site management team to focus on and reconcile possible management conflicts between different site objectives, such as nature conservation and public recreation. It is best prepared through a Local Management Group (LMG) and engagement with the wider community of stakeholders. A good management plan describes the site, evaluates its important features, sets out main aims and objectives, contains a costed work programme and describes how the site will be monitored and the plan reviewed. This process can be very valuable in its own right and if carried out well usually results in some people becoming involved as volunteers and giving significant amounts of time to help out on “their LNR”.

It goes without saying that the wildlife and geological value of a site can be increased, often substantially, by good management. In addition to practical habitat and species management and habitat creation, such things as interpretative materials and well-planned, clearly defined footpaths have an important role to play. When it comes to the use of LNRs for education and public enjoyment, explaining the overall management and the balance of uses can often form part of the actual educational process.

Some existing LNRs, while declared by district councils, are owned and/or managed on a day to day basis by voluntary conservation bodies. For example, the Ulster Wildlife Trust (UWT) own and manage the Bog Meadows LNR in Belfast. Many other conservation organisations, such as the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), National Trust (NT), Woodland Trust (WT), Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT), to name but a few, also have considerable experience and expertise in nature reserve management.

There is no mandatory requirement to consult NIEA about work proposed on a LNR except where the LNR is also an Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI). In order for councils to fulfil their statutory responsibilities in this regard, they must ensure that any proposal pertaining to LNR declaration or management will not impact on the feature interest of the ASSI. As with any council owned ASSI, whether or not it is a LNR, applications for consent or assent should be directed through the normal NIEA channels.

## 5.2 Forming a Local Management Group

LNRs can benefit considerably from the input of Local Management Groups (LMGs). Individual LNRs will vary greatly in their size, habitat composition and location, some being rural and others being urban fringe or entirely urban. The composition and use of local committees, management or friends groups will therefore vary correspondingly.

A LMG might be composed of district council staff, local community representatives, neighbours, or potential users of the LNR such as a local environmental or other interest group. A LMG can provide a useful conduit of information and opinions among interested parties and provide a valuable element of a LBAP or a LA21 process.

LMGs can be particularly valuable in advising district councils on such matters as management objectives for the LNR and the preparation and monitoring of the management plan. They can also be involved in voluntary warden schemes, in organising events and in helping to police the site for litter, vandalism and other anti-social activities. Local resident representation on the group can be a very effective way of lessening any potential user group conflicts and in forging positive links between the council and the local community. Overall, this can result in better social cohesion locally.

There is no reason why a LMG cannot be formed before the formal CNCC endorsement of LNR status. In fact, this is likely to prove useful in formulating LNR aims and objectives to put to CNCC.

The LMG should adopt and operate, through the management plan, a system for monitoring standards of management to ensure that the criteria under which the LNR was initially designated still pertain. The option of de-designating the LNR should be retained in the event of the site consistently falling below those standards, and any decision on the part of the local council in this regard should be communicated to CNCC and NIEA.

## 5.3 Bye-laws for LNRs

Bye-laws are not a pre-requisite for the management of LNRs and it is recommended that they are only used as a management tool when other measures have proved to be unsuccessful. There is a balance between what can be achieved with bye-law implementation as against what can be done with good reserve management and planning, and meaningful community consultation and involvement.

Depending on the location or particular circumstances pertaining in a LNR, it may be desirable or necessary for a district council to exercise its powers under Article 22, paragraph 3 (Box 2, Page 4) and paragraphs (2) and (3) of Article 19 of the 1985 order (Box 4, Page 21) , to make and apply bye-laws.

The need to do this will normally depend, to a large extent, on the degree of public access to the reserve and the sensitivity of key features of the site to human disturbance or interference. Bye-laws in this situation can be useful in providing support for council staff or the Police Service for Northern Ireland (PSNI) in controlling undesirable and unacceptable activities.

It should be noted that bye-laws do not override existing rights over land and it is recommended that only one set of bye-laws be applied to any piece of land. Thus, if a newly declared LNR has existing open space bye-laws applying, these need to be revoked before LNR bye-laws are applied. In view of the time and effort involved in this, it is worth weighing the existing bye-laws against those proposed and seeking new bye-laws only if necessary.

There are many other mechanisms for managing potentially damaging activities that councils will be familiar with including amongst others a staff presence, education, interpretation, signage, engagement with local stakeholders and codes of good practice.

## Article 19 of The Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Northern Ireland) Order 1985.

# 4

### *Byelaws for protection of nature reserves*

- (1) *Subject to this Article, the Department may make byelaws for the protection of any nature reserve, not being a nature reserve provided under Article 22 by a district council, in relation to which a declaration under article 16(1) or Article 18(1) is in force.*
- (2) *Without prejudice to paragraph (1), byelaws under this Article may-*
  - (a) *provide for prohibiting or restricting the entry into, or movement within, the nature reserve of persons, vehicles, boats and animals;*
  - (b) *prohibit or restrict the killing, taking, molesting or disturbance of living creatures of any description in the nature reserve, the taking, destruction or disturbance of eggs, larvae or other immature stage, of any such creature, the taking of, or interference with, vegetation of any description in the nature reserve, or the doing of anything therein which will interfere with the soil or damage any object in the reserve;*
  - (c) *prohibit or restrict the shooting of birds or of birds of any description within such area surrounding or adjoining the nature reserve (whether the area be of land or of sea) as is requisite for the protection of the nature reserve;*
  - (d) *regulate or prohibit the taking away of soil, turf, sand or minerals of any description;*
  - (e) *prohibit or restrict, or provide for prohibiting or restricting, the lighting of fires in the nature reserve, or the doing of anything likely to cause fire in the nature reserve; and*
  - (f) *provide for the issue, on such terms and subject to such conditions as may be specified in the byelaws, of permits authorising entry into the nature reserve or the doing of anything therein which would otherwise be unlawful, whether under the byelaws or otherwise.*
- (3) *Before making byelaws under this Article the Department shall consult the Committee for Nature Conservation.*



# Appendix 1

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## Checklist of information helpful for consultation with the Committee for Nature Conservation and the Countryside (CNCC)

1. Site name.
2. Location including county, townland and nearest town or village.
3. Proposed declaring authority and purpose of formal declaration as a LNR.
4. Grid reference.
5. Area in hectares.
6. Map on A4 sheet showing site location.
7. Map on A4 sheet showing site boundary
8. Site ownership - Details of district council's legal interest in the site.
9. Description of the habitats and species found on the site with a map showing the distribution of the main habitat types and information on priority species or habitats.
10. Where appropriate, a map and outline description of surrounding land use and connectivity to 'green' networks.
11. In the case of LNR sites whose interest is primarily for geological features, or where geological features are an important part of the interest, a description with maps/diagrams as necessary would be helpful.
12. Description of the value of the site for its natural features and details of any statutory or non-statutory conservation designations both within and adjacent to the LNR.
13. Description of the value of the site to schools (where appropriate).
14. Description of the value of the site as a place in which local people can enjoy informal recreation and contact with wildlife (where appropriate).
15. An outline of management policies/objectives/prescriptions.
16. An outline of proposed management arrangements e.g. LMG, staffing, funding.

# Appendix 2

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# Appendix 3

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## Abbreviations and Glossary

- ASSI** Area of Special Scientific Interest – These areas merit special protection and represent the very best examples of Northern Ireland’s natural heritage. Within them may be found our most important, rare or threatened habitats and species or geological features.
- Biodiversity** The variety of life found on earth consisting of many millions of distinct biological species. Biodiversity in Northern Ireland includes all the different species of living things that are found here on land, in the soil, in the air and in our waters.
- Birds Directive** A European Union directive (2009/147/EC) adopted in 1979. It aims to protect all European wild birds and the habitats of listed species, in particular through the designation of Special Protection Areas (SPAs). These aim to safeguard the habitats of migratory birds and certain particularly threatened bird species.
- CNCC** Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside – a statutory independent advisory body to the Department of the Environment on matters affecting nature conservation and the countryside. It has 17 members.
- Geodiversity** The variety of earth materials, forms and processes that constitute and shape the Earth, either the whole or a specific part of it. It is worth noting that the biodiversity of an ecosystem stems at least in part from its underlying geology.
- Habitats Directive** A European Union directive (92/43/EEC) adopted in 1992. It aims to protect some 220 habitats and approximately 1,000 species listed in the directive’s annexes. The directive led to the setting up of a network of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) which together with the existing Special Protection Areas form an ecological network of protected sites across the European Union called Natura 2000.



- LA21** Local Agenda 21 - At the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, the United Nations agreed that the best starting point for the achievement of sustainable development is at the local level. Thus some local authorities have drawn up their own Local Agenda 21 (LA21) strategy.
- LBAP** Local Biodiversity Action Plan - a LBAP document usually sets out a strategic framework and a series of detailed species and habitat action plans outlining how individuals and organisations can work to try and halt biodiversity loss in a local area. The plan is then used to achieve action for the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity on the ground.
- LNR** Local Nature Reserve - an area of land, designated by a District Council, to conserve its nature conservation, earth science and recreational value, with the primary land use being for nature conservation purposes.
- LMG** Local Management Group - a group set up to advise on the management of Local Nature Reserves (LNRs). The group could be composed for example of district council staff, local community representatives, neighbours, or potential users of the LNR such as local environmental or other interest groups.
- NGO** Non-Governmental Organisation - A legally constituted organisation that operates independently from any government.
- NIBS** Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy - A government strategy published in 2002 that provides a framework to tackle the main issues affecting biodiversity in Northern Ireland. It seeks the involvement of all sectors of our society and action at local community level to halt the loss of biodiversity and reverse it.
- NIEA** Northern Ireland Environment Agency - An Agency of the Department of the Environment (DOE) whose aim is to protect, conserve and promote the natural environment and built heritage for the benefit of present and future generations.

- NNR** National Nature Reserve - an area of land designated by government because of its national importance for flora, fauna and/or geological features of special interest. NNRs are managed with the primary purpose of biodiversity and/or geodiversity conservation and to provide special opportunities for public access, study or research.
- SLNCIs** Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance – sites which represent a range of habitat types such as woodland, heath, bogs, lakes, etc and sites of specific geological or earth science interest and locations important to specific flora or fauna that are formally identified in Area Plans. Specific planning policies will then apply to any development proposals on these sites (PPS2).
- Sustainable Development** This can be defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.





Our aim is to protect, conserve and promote the natural environment and built heritage for the benefit of present and future generations.

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ISBN 978-1-907053-19-1



An Agency within the Department of the  
**Environment**  
[www.doeni.gov.uk](http://www.doeni.gov.uk)



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