**NIEA Business Plan 2017-18**

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**CHIEF EXECUTIVE’S FOREWORD**

I am pleased to present the Northern Ireland Environment Agency’s (NIEA) Business Plan for 2017-18.

During the period of this plan, we will continue to engage with our customers and stakeholders who have a responsible and progressive approach to environmental management and will get tougher with those who want to take short cuts or who damage our environment and heritage.

At the strategic level the Agency, as part of the Department’s Environment, Marine and Fisheries Group, will provide significant support in the delivery of the Department’s Programme for Government (PfG) indicators which underpin the second strategic outcome in the draft PfG document (“*We live and work sustainably – protecting the environment*). Furthermore, during the year the Department and Agency will be taking forward the programme of work necessary to ensure Northern Ireland specific implications and issues associated with the significant issue of the exit from the EU are highlighted and recognised, engaging as appropriate with our key stakeholders.

More specifically, regulation of the waste sector continues to be a key challenge for the Agency and we have been continuing to work with the waste industry, councils and other partners, to deliver a compliant and crime free waste industry. We are also keen to support Council initiatives to promote resource efficiency in order to reduce the amount of waste created and we will play our role by strengthening our regulatory oversight of the residual waste that is created. We will continue to reform the way that we regulate and the way that we provide input to planning decisions.

We will continue to build stronger partnerships with our customers and stakeholders. We will work with businesses and other Government Departments to promote a more sustainable approach in managing both waste materials and natural resources in order to protect our environment and unlock the economic opportunities provided by the resource efficiency agenda. We will also tackle the most acute environmental priorities facing us, such as safeguarding our most valuable habitats and landscape, improving water quality, protecting our priority species, encouraging access to the countryside and promoting the natural environment through our Country Parks and Nature Reserves.

We recognise that improved environmental outcomes could be achieved through a more proactive approach to education and through highlighting key issues. We have therefore placed a greater emphasis on ensuring the provision of readily accessible, high quality and timely information and guidance to the wide range of customers and sectors served by the Agency. This will primarily be achieved through improved on-line guidance and information and working with the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) to ensure to ensure key environmental issues feature as part of their education and awareness programmes.

We will also continue to work with eNGOs and other key partners to deliver positive environmental outcomes across our designated sites network and the wider countryside mainly through RDP and INTERREG and the Departments Environmental Forum. Our Business Plan sets out these and other priorities in clear detail so that our staff know what they have to deliver, our customers and stakeholders know what to expect from us and the public understands our key objectives and targets. Whilst the focus of restructuring and reform will be on continuing to reduce costs, it will remain important to deliver against the new draft PfG commitments, focus on Ministerial priorities and maintain key public services during the incoming year. This has been reflected in this Plan.

With the construction of the new building at Ballykelly, some 35 NIEA staff will move to the new building by the end of March 2018, joining other DAERA colleagues at the new site.

Finally, we look forward to working with all of our partners and meeting the expectations set out in this 2017-18 Business Plan.

David Small

Chief Executive

**Introduction**

1. This is the Business Plan for the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) for the 2017-18 year. It describes the strategic context within which the NIEA operates, identifies the key priorities for the year and sets out the specific targets the Agency is seeking to achieve to meet its Programme for Government, Departmental and Agency commitments in 2017-18.
2. The NIEA is an Executive Agency within the Department of Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) in Northern Ireland operating within the context of the Department’s overall vision and strategic objectives. The Agency’s primary purpose is to protect and enhance Northern Ireland’s environment.
3. The Agency’s Framework Document sets out its relationship with the Department, the approach to corporate governance and provides information on the arrangements that have been put in place to ensure proper and effective management of the Agency’s affairs.
4. We have a total staffing level of c.460 staff (Full Time Equivalents) who are located in offices and regional sites across Northern Ireland. There are two major sites: one in Belfast and one in Lisburn, with the Agency’s headquarters located in the Klondyke Building, Belfast. As mentioned in the CEO foreword, 35 Agency staff will be moving to the new DAERA building at Ballykelly from January 2018.

**Structure**

1. The NIEA sits within the Environment, Marine and Fisheries Group of the Department and is headed by a Chief Executive supported by two Executive Directors with responsibility for the Agency’s two divisions, Natural Environment and Resource Efficiency. A Business Support Team assists the Chief Executive and Directors in the delivery of key corporate functions such as strategic planning, governance and financial and budget management. An organisational chart showing the Divisions within the Agency is at **Annex A** (page 13).
2. The Chief Executive of the Agency is also the Agency Accounting Officer with the responsibilities and delegations outlined in Chapter 3 of the Department of Finance (DoF) Guide - Managing Public Money Northern Ireland (MPMNI).
3. A Statutory Advisory Council, the Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside (CNCC), provides the Agency with independent advice on environmental issues and activities.
4. A formal Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, which includes a non-executive chair, two independent members and representatives from both internal and external audit, advises the Chief Executive on issues of risk, control, governance and assurance.

**Strategic context**

1. The Department’s Vision and Strategic Outcomes have been defined as follows:

Vision: “A thriving and sustainable economy, environment and rural community”

Strategic Outcomes:

1. Sustainable agri-food, fisheries, forestry and industrial sectors;
2. A clean, healthy environment, benefiting people, nature and the economy; and
3. A thriving rural economy, contributing to prosperity and wellbeing.
4. Although the Agency will deliver outputs relating to all these outcomes, it will primarily deliver against the second outcome. In turn, this departmental strategic outcome underpins and links to the following three Programme for Government (PfG) proposed outcomes:
* We live and work sustainably – protecting the environment.
* We have created a place where people want to live and work, to visit and invest.
* We enjoy long, healthy, active lives.
1. To help deliver outputs relating to the Department’s outcomes, specifically outcome two, the Agency will focus on the following key priorities:
2. A fully compliant regulated industry;
3. Freshwater and marine environment at “good status”;
4. A compliant crime free waste sector;
5. Good habitat and landscape quality with species abundance and diversity; and
6. Promotion of environmentally sustainable development and infrastructure.
7. The targets through which these key priorities, and therefore the Department’s strategic outcomes, will be achieved, are shown on pages 11to 12. The targets which are included in the Department’s Annual Business Plan are also highlighted. Furthermore, in line with the NIEA Framework Document the 7 targets agreed by the Minister as the Agency’s Key Performance Targets (KPTs) are highlighted and also listed separately at **Annex B** – page 14.
8. The NIEA has statutory duties with regards to waste and water regulation (including drinking water), pollution control and the natural environment.
9. The main activities relating to these statutory duties and outcomes are the protection of the environment through provision of advice and guidance, alongside the Agency’s ongoing regulatory activities; statutory designations; research and monitoring; raising public awareness of the environment and the role of the public in protecting it. Using our professional and technical expertise, NIEA also contributes to environmental and natural heritage policy development.
10. We will continue to work with key stakeholders in our Regulated Industry which includes all businesses that require permits, licences, and consents which are issued by NIEA and that set the limits for permissible discharges to protect our natural and aquatic environments. We have developed a Compliance Assessment Model for a number of our regulatory regimes with the resulting measurement of compliance levels in excess of 90% across all regimes demonstrating the effectiveness of our approach.
11. We also face numerous challenges within the realm of biodiversity; such as agricultural intensification or abandonment, and planning development. We will seek to address these through targeted actions on priority habitats and species and in partnership with eNGOs landowners and other third parties.
12. The Agency is exploring the most effective and efficient way to deliver environmental advice and guidance to our customers to comply with legislative requirements; to deliver environmental outcomes and enable businesses to be profitable and sustainable.
13. The Agency has developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Ulster Farmers Union. This partnership approach will facilitate a more effective collaboration between the Agency and the farming community in order to deliver both higher levels of environmental compliance and increased farm sustainability. This will be achieved through an improved focus on the provision of advice and guidance alongside the Agency’s ongoing regulatory activities.

**Business Planning, Reporting and Monitoring**

1. This NIEA Business Plan covers the year from 1st April 2017 to 31st March 2018. In line with the Department’s Performance Management Framework, the Agency uses the Outcomes Framework approach to business planning which enables staff to link their work to the Agency’s targets through their forward looking annual Personal Performance Agreements (PPAs).
2. The Agency has established monitoring and reporting arrangements in relation to its Business Plan targets. In the first instance, each target is assigned to an Assistant Director/Head of Branch who will have responsibility for delivery and monitoring progress.
3. During the course of the financial year, detailed progress against each Business Plan target will be reported to the NIEA Board. At the highest level, reports setting out the achievement of the NIEA targets within the DAERA Annual Business Plan will be reported to the Departmental Board for the periods to 30 September, 31 December and 31 March, with the reports to 30 September and 31 March also being submitted to the Minister and the AERA Committee.
4. Progress will be reported on a Red/Amber/Green (RAG) basis as follows:

**Green** - achieved or on track for delivery;

**Green**/**Amber** - level of progress is broadly on track with easily redeemable deviations from plans;

**Amber** - rate of progress is less than planned; and

**Red** - not achieved or not expected to be achieved.

1. The NIEA Board and Corporate Governance sub-committee will oversee the level of progress being made towards the milestones and targets set and will approve corrective actions required, as appropriate, during the course of the year.
2. The Agency’s Annual Report and Accounts, published in the summer, will provide a summary of the achievement of the Agency’s Key Performance Targets, as agreed by the Minister.

**Funding for 2017/18**

29. The Agency’s primary source of funding in terms of Departmental Resource and Capital expenditure comes from within the DAERA overall budget allocation as agreed by the Executive and approved by the Assembly. For the 2017/18 financial year, the Agency has been allocated an opening indicative net Resource budget of £19.8 million. The level of capital funding will be established following the first in-year monitoring round. The Agency also funds additional expenditure on programmes through income from services and the carrier bag levy. Income for 2017-18 is estimated to be nearly £11 million. **Annex C** (page 15) provides a breakdown of the resource funding, including income.

The successful delivery of all the targets in this Plan will of course be dependent on securing additional resource and capital funding through the in year monitoring rounds.

**NIEA TARGETS (2017-18)**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **No.** | **2017/18 Targets** | **By When** |
| 1 | Initiate Conservation Management plans for 40 terrestrial designated sites. **KPT & DAERA TARGET** | March 2018 |
| 2 | Issue the 2018/19 Environment Fund offers. **KPT** | November2017 |
| 3 | Respond to 90% of statutory planning consultation requests within 21 days or agreed timescales. **KPT**  | March 2018 |
| 4 | Establish an outdoor recreation strategic group to oversee and monitor the implementation of the Outdoor Recreation Action Plan. | March 2018 |
| 5 | Ensure that five NIEA country parks are rated at least ‘good’ by Tourism NI. | March 2018 |
| 6 | Achieve 90% compliance with all Authorisations (to include permits/licences) and Regulatory requirements using an agreed compliance assessment methodology.  **KPT & DAERA Target** | March 2018 |
| 7 | Agree a Remediation Strategy for the illegal waste deposits at Mobuoy Road. **KPT & DAERA Target** | March 2018 |
| 8 | Deliver the Prosperity Agreement Programme, signing a further 3 agreements and monitor and maintain the existing portfolio. | March 2018 |
| 9 | Increase the number of Water Bodies achieving "good" status by delivering 80% of the actions identified for each catchment project in the 2017/18 catchment work programme.**KPT & DAERA Target** | March 2018 |
| 10 | Complete Cross Compliance inspections on at least 1% of all farms and 5% under derogation by 31 December 2017. | December 2017 |
| 11 | Engage with UFU to implement an MOU to deliver higher levels of environmental compliance and contribute towards achieving Water Framework Directive objectives. | March 2018 |
| 12 | Increase the understanding of Waste Crime in Northern Ireland by completing biannual Strategic Assessments in May and November each year. **KPT** | November 2017 |
| 13 | Progress at least 90% of all incident / intelligence reports within 28 days of receipt. | March 2018 |
| 14 | Implement the project plan for delivery of the Regulatory Transformation Programme. | March 2018 |
| 15 | Implement a new model for delivering Environmental Advice and Guidance to customers. | March 2018 |
| 16 | Provisional resource and capital outturn to be at least 99% of the final budgets. | March 2018 |

**Annex A**

**NIEA ORGANISATION CHART**

**Annex B**

# KEY PERFORMANCE TARGETS 2017-18

| **Target Number** | **Target** |
| --- | --- |
| 1 | Initiate Conservation Management plans for 40 terrestrial designated sites.  |
| 2 | Issue the 2018/19 Environment Fund offers.  |
| 3 | Respond to 90% of statutory planning consultation requests within 21 days or agreed timescales.  |
| 4 | Achieve 90% compliance with all Authorisations (to include permits/licences) and Regulatory requirements using an agreed compliance assessment methodology.  |
| 5 | Agree a Remediation Strategy for the illegal waste deposits at Mobuoy Road.  |
| 6 | Increase the number of Water Bodies achieving "good" status by delivering 80% of the actions identified for each catchment project in the 2017/18 catchment work programme. |
| 7 | Increase the understanding of Waste Crime in Northern Ireland by completing biannual Strategic Assessments in May and November each year.  |

**ANNEX C**

**NIEA FUNDING (2017-18)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Notes** |  | **£’000s** | **% (of Gross Resource Budget)** | **2016-17****Opening budgets** | **% (of Gross Resource Budget** |
| 1 | Salaries and wages | 20,754 | 67 | 21,379 | 68 |
|  | Depreciation (ring fenced) | 1,420 | 5 | 1,420 | 5 |
|  | **Sub Total** | **22,174** | **72** | **22,799** | **73** |
|  | **Non salary and non ring fenced** |  |  |  |  |
| 2 | GAE | 1,843 | 6 | 1,849 |  |
| 3 | Contracted Services | 4,086 | 13 | 4,217 |  |
| 4 | Grants | 2,713 | 9 | 2,356 |  |
|  | **Sub Total** | **8,642** |  | **8,422** | **27** |
|  | **Gross Budgets allocated** | **30,816** | **100** | **31,221** | **100** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | **Funded By:** |  |  |  |  |
|  | I**ncome** |  |  |  |  |
|  | Regulatory & Commercial | 8,180 |  | 7,900 |  |
|  | Carrier bag levy | 2,804 |  | 3,390 |  |
|  | **Total Income** | **10,984** | **36** | **11,290** | **36** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | **Net Resource DEL budget**  | **19,832** | **64** |  | **64** |

**Notes**

1. Non industrial salaries, industrial wages, overtime and local council rivers officers.
2. Travel and subsistence and non salary running costs (including accommodation costs).
3. Management agreements in respect of designated sites; maintenance of country parks and nature reserves; environmental sampling, monitoring and analysis; mapping services; and vehicle running costs.
4. Environmental grants funded from the carrier bag levy income and disbursed mainly through the competitive Environment Fund.
5. The 2017-18 figures reflect the opening indicative budgets.

**CAPITAL INVESTMENT**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2017-18****£’000s** | **2016-17** **Opening Budget****£,000s** |
| Vehicles, machinery, equipment and capital works at country parks | **Nil** | **1,255** |