

**Northern Ireland Environment Agency**

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Benderg Bay, Killard National Nature Reserve

**Policy Position Statement**

**on the Establishment and Management of**

**Statutory Nature Reserves**

**November 2016**

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# 1. Preface

## 1.1 Context

The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) is an Executive Agency within the Environment, Marine and Fisheries Group (EMFG) of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA). The NIEA vision is: ***To create prosperity and well being through effective environment and natural heritage management and regulation.***This objective is underpinned by the overall vision of DAERA of: ***A thriving and sustainable economy, environment and rural community****.* Among its remits, NIEA is charged with conserving Northern Ireland’s natural heritage.

**Nature and Nature Conservation**

‘Nature’ comprises inter-related habitats, flora, fauna and earth science features. Nature conservation is the process of protecting the nature and natural processes of an area over the long term. DAERA is charged with making a range of nature conservation designations covering both land, freshwater and the sea. These include international designations (World Heritage and Ramsar Wetland sites), EU designations (Special Areas of Conservation [SAC] and Special Protection Areas [SPA]), and national designations (Areas of Special Scientific Interest [ASSI], Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty [AONB], statutory Nature Reserves and National Nature Reserves (NRs / NNRs) and Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs)). In many situations these designations overlap.

**Nature Reserves**

Nature reserves represent ‘core areas’ of high biodiversity value – reservoirs for native wildlife managed primarily for nature conservation. Among them, National Nature Reserves contain examples of many of the most important natural and semi-natural terrestrial and coastal ecosystems in the UK. They are managed to conserve their habitats and/or to provide opportunities for scientific study of the habitats communities and species present in them. They provide ideal places for long term research on natural processes.

As well as protecting nature, nature reserves represent an important ‘natural capital’ resource, providing people with the opportunity to learn about and study our natural heritage and biodiversity in a managed environment and to engage with nature. They are thus an important element in the conservation of biodiversity in the wider countryside. They also may be managed to provide public recreation to the extent that this is compatible with their natural heritage interests.

## 1.2 Purpose of this statement

This Policy Position Statement relates specifically to statutory Nature Reserves (formally declared under enabling legislation) and replaces the statement published in 2006 and subsequent re-draft in 2012. The Statement outlines:

* How statutory Nature Reserves can continue to make a valuable contribution to the protection of biodiversity and the delivery of nature conservation objectives
* The basis for selecting individual sites as (National) Nature Reserves, including new sites, is based on evaluation of sites against 10 core principles
* The declaration processes
* The management principles for nature reserves.
* The circumstances under which the de-designation of a site may be considered and the process for doing so.

The broad principles for all NIEA land and property management are set out in the NIEA Policy Position Statement on Land and Property Management 2016 (DAERA document DO1-15-112521). This NR policy paper does not address funding and management delivery issues.

# 2. Summary

Statutory Nature Reserves in UK are declared by the national statutory nature conservation bodies in each country (Natural England, Scottish Natural Heritage and Natural Resources Wales), and managed either directly by them, by voluntary conservation bodies or by local council authorities. They are places which are important for wildlife and natural features. There are currently 353 National Nature Reserves (NNRs) nationally in the UK, 224 in England, 41 in Scotland, 76 in Wales and 12 in Northern Ireland. Appendix 2 is a list of the current 12 NNR and 37 Nature Reserves (NRs) in NI.

In reviewing and renewing its policy on the establishment and management of statutory nature reserves, NIEA has undertaken an analysis of the value of statutory nature reserves in delivering Government objectives. This resulting Policy Position Statement explores and affirms the role statutory nature reserves play in conservation management in Northern Ireland and in providing places for people to connect with wildlife. Nature Reserves contain a wide range of species and habitats, plant and animal communities, geology and landforms. Their declaration is a public recognition by Government of their importance and affords statutory protection under planning regulations.

The Statement defines the drivers for the declaration and management of nature reserves and the way that the statutory nature reserve series can contribute to the long-term protection of biodiversity and geodiversity in Northern Ireland.

UK Country Conservation Agencies have now recognised that the NNR accolade is superseded by other national and international designations and that the role of NNRs is to continue to protect nationally important sites while making them available for public access and / or for research. Their role as people-focused designations is now deemed to be more important than formerly. NNRs allow people to experience nature and may contribute to the rural economy through delivery of management and as visitor attractions.

## The NIEA vision for Nature Reserves

***A suite of Nature Reserves and National Nature Reserves reflecting the natural heritage of Northern Ireland, contributing to its protection and managed, using best practice, to conserve and showcase features of interest for the benefit of present and future generations.***

## Aims

1. ***Utilise Nature Reserves and National Nature Reserves to maximise the delivery of the Government‘s responsibilities and targets for conserving the natural heritage of Northern Ireland under National, European and other International obligations.***
2. ***Maintain a series of Nature Reserves which reflects the range of major habitat types, earth science strata and landforms in Northern Ireland with at least one good example of each as NNR and manage them to an exemplary standard.***
3. ***Use Nature Reserves to further our understanding of ecosystem functions which contribute to a healthy and resilient wider environment in Northern Ireland.***
4. ***Maximise the public benefit deriving from the nature reserve series.***

## Objectives

In pursuit of these aims and the realisation of the vision, NIEA has identified the following over-arching objective:

***The declaration of a suite of statutory nature reserves for Northern Ireland to reflect the diversity of its natural heritage.***

This will be delivered through the following sub-objectives:

1. declare (as resources allow) any new or extended (N)NRs to recognise their contribution to achieving NI’s Biodiversity targets by providing reservoirs for biodiversity;
2. recognise the supporting role Nature Reserves can play in the programme of ASSI, SAC and SPA declaration, monitoring and management through having direct management control with the scope to develop and demonstrate best management practice;
3. provide opportunities for the public to experience natural and semi-natural habitats and landscape features and to interact with our native flora and fauna, where it is appropriate and practicable to do so, and, though visiting reserves, through publications and on-line information, to increase understanding and appreciation of the environment and public commitment to its protection and enhancement;
4. de-declare sites that no longer meet the essential criteria.

The basis for selecting individual sites as (National) Nature Reserves is based on evaluation of sites against ten common core principles. These are; i)features that are of national importance, ii)The primary land use of NNRs is for NATURE CONSERVATION, iii) managed to the highest possible standard, iv) will have LONG TERM SURETY, v)provide opportunities for STUDY and RESEARCH, vi)provide opportunities for PUBLIC ACCESS, vii) provide opportunities for INTERPRETATION, EDUCATION, viii)act as a focus for encouraging STAKEHOLDER & LOCAL COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT, ix) be managed by the most appropriate bodies, x) contribute to LOCAL ECONOMIES and deliver SOCIAL JUSTICE

In applying these principles to Northern Ireland, all the requirements of principles i to v must be met for a site to qualify for NNR status. There must also be ‘added value’ in terms of public benefit so an NNR must contribute significantly to at least one of principles vi to x, especially as a site for public to visit and enjoy. Statutory NRs need not exhibit features of national importance, but must meet criteria ii to v and at least one of principles vi to x.

If an existing site does not meet the base criteria above then it will be de-declared.

The main aim of managing sites as statutory nature reserves is to conserve their scientific features for current and future generations. Because statutory nature reserves are specifically managed for nature conservation, they present a greater safeguard for the natural habitats, native species and earth science features which they contain than can be assured through designation as ASSI alone. As most ASSIs remain under private ownership and management, nature conservation outcomes are likely to be seen as secondary to revenue generating activities. Nature reserves also enable the trial of habitat and species management techniques and the demonstration of those techniques which prove best.

Secondary aims are to provide opportunities, where appropriate and practicable, for study and research into native habitats and species and the functioning of ecosystems, and for the public to experience natural habitats and landscape features and to interact quietly with nature. Many sites have features of landscape, historical, cultural and recreational value which add to their attractiveness as places to visit.

Nature Reserves allow for the protection of land that does not meet the strict scientific interest criteria of ASSI. Thus NRs can be a vehicle for preserving sites in anticipation that they will be important in the future, either for species and habitats perhaps in relation to climate change. They may act as a reservoir of native biodiversity from which species can recolonise nearby lands undergoing ecological restoration, and may also serve as a refuge for species whose range is changing with the altering climate.

Chapter seven outlines how NIEA envisages how (N)NRs will be managed to deliver the ten core principles as outlined in 5.2.

The policy as stated here will be reviewed and the statutory nature reserves series will be evaluated within the next ten years to ensure the aims and objectives as set out in this statement are being achieved.

# 3. Introduction

In Great Britain the concept of nature reserves originates in the first national policy for nature conservation established in 1947 by Government White Paper. The underlying philosophy was that nature conservation should be centred on the safeguarding of key areas that represented major examples of natural and semi-natural biotopes together with their characteristic plant and animal communities. The idea of nature reserves as outdoor laboratories, providing opportunities for long-term research on natural processes was an important driver of the movement to establish NRs.

The title ‘Nature Reserve’ has international recognition as an area where nature is protected and, whilst there may be public access, provision to protect nature is the top priority.

## 3.1 Background leading to the current position

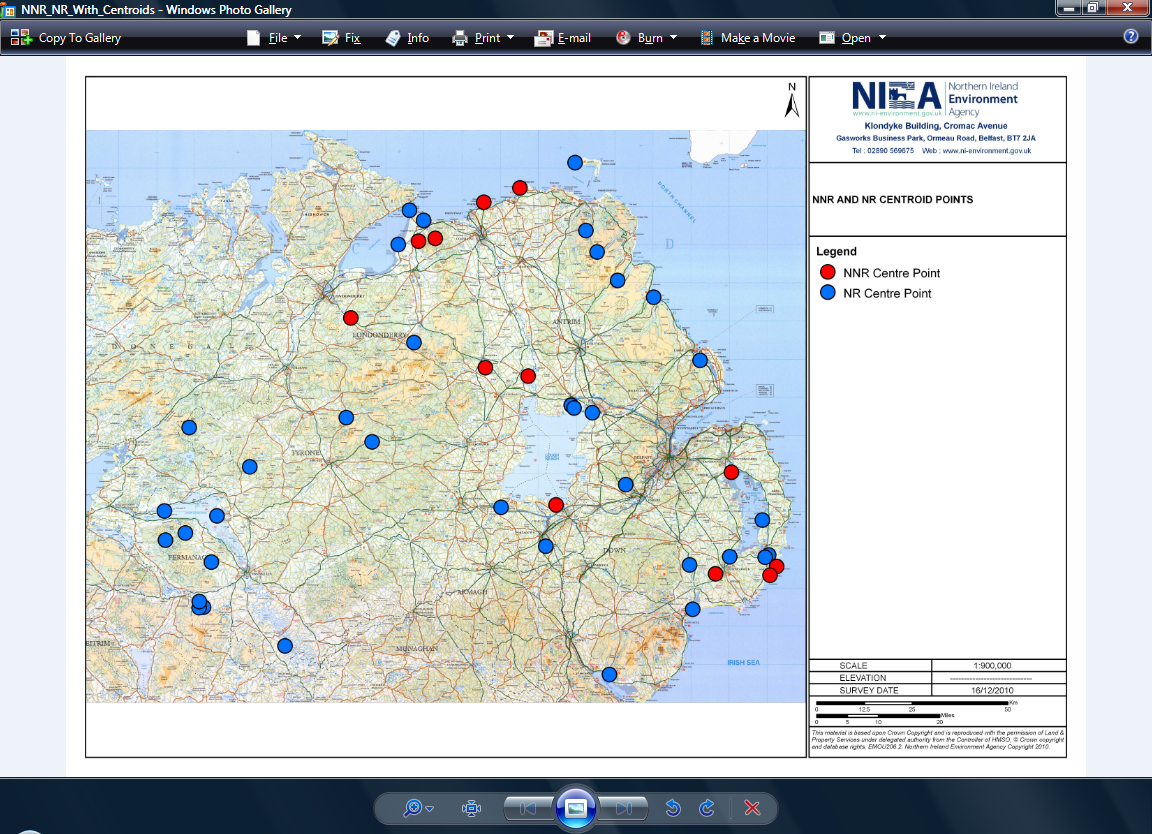
The first statutory nature reserves in Northern Ireland were declared in 1970 under the provisions of the Amenity Lands Act (Northern Ireland) 1965. 37 nature reserves had been declared by 1985. The 1965 Act was then superseded by the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (NCALO), which introduced the concept of National Nature Reserves (NNRs) for sites of “national importance” while retaining the nature reserve (NR) designation. 12 such NNRs had been declared up to August 2016.

Figure 1; Locations of NRs and NNRs in NI.

The largest (N)NR is North Strangford Lough NNR with 1015 ha and the smallest is Swan Island NR at 0.1 ha. The total area of NNRs and NRs is 5097 ha. Details of NNRs and NRs are given in **Appendix 2** and on the DAERA website:

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/national-nature-reserves-digital-datasets>

Nature Reserves and National Nature Reserves are collectively referred to as ‘statutory’ nature reserves, abbreviated hereafter to (N)NRs. A short history of the declaration of statutory nature reserves in Northern Ireland is given in **Appendix 1**.

Since 1985 NIEA has focused resources on habitat survey and geological research leading to the declaration of ASSIs, underpinning declaration of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) required by the European Union for the implementation of Article 6 its Habitats and Birds Directives. However there has been no pressure to declare NNRs and so only 12 have been declared. Many of the existing suite of (N)NRs are now included in the ASSI series and the Natura 2000 network (comprising the SACs and SPAs).

The current (N)NR Series contains representative examples of many habitats, species and earth science features but an assessment of the current suite indicates that the series needs to be updated so that declarations continue to meet the essential criteria agreed with other UK Country Agencies.

Whereas some sites designated as NRs are not of national scientific interest, other lands managed as nature reserves and designated as SAC or SPA lack formal (N)NR designation. There is a risk that this discrepancy may create the perception that these sites are not valued by NIEA despite their international importance. Many sites managed either by DAERA or by approved bodies as nature reserves are branded and marketed as Nature Reserves but do not have statutory NR recognition. Most of these merit statutory NR status the lack of which represents a weakness in the protection such status would afford under planning regulations.

**3.1.1 (N)NRs supporting role to ASSI designations**

Prior to 1985 designation as NR was the primary mechanism for site protection, (N)NRs now represent only a small proportion of lands protected for nature conservation. The area of land declared as (N)NR is very small in comparison to the total area declared as ASSI, SAC and SPA (see Table 1 below). Together these sites represent a reservoir for biodiversity in NI.

Table 1 Area of land in Northern Ireland subject to nature conservation designations in 2016

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | Unit: hectares |
| 1 | ASSI | 110,700 |
| 2 | SAC | 85,900 |
| 3 | SPA | 114,600 |
| 4 | Ramsar Wetland | 77,700 |
| 5 | NNR | 1,800 |
| 6 | NR | 3,300 |
| 7 | NIEA undesignated lands managed as NR | 1,500 |

Rows 1-4 <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/doe/ni-environmental-statistics-report-2016-appendix.xlsx>, most recent year for which data is available.

Rows 5-7 NIEA databases

Line 7 of the Table shows the area owned by DAERA and managed by NIEA as nature reserve but not designated. Many approved bodies also have substantial areas in the same category. At least half as much land again which meets the essential (N)NR criteria and is currently managed as NR is not yet recognised as (N)NR by declaration. This may result in confusion and undermine the value of the (N)NR declaration.) Several (N)NRs have been extended by acquisition but the additional areas have not yet been declared. The current designation situation for some (N)NRs is likely to cause confusion, particularly among stakeholders when SAC management plans are being brought forward. For example half of NIEA’s land holding at Ballynahone Bog is an NNR and the other half is not despite all of it being SAC.

This raises the question whether all lands with suitable tenure and managed for nature should be designated as NR or NNR.

**3.1.2 Northern Ireland approach compared to those of the other UK Countries**

All UK Country Conservation Agencies now accept that the (N)NR accolade no longer provides the principle legal mechanism for site protection, having been superseded by other national and international designations. While the role of (N)NRs is still to protect and conserve nationally important sites, it is also to make them available for public access and / or for study and research. Their role as people-focused designations is now deemed to be more important than formerly. (N)NRs allow people to experience nature and may contribute to the rural economy through delivery of management and as visitor attractions.

The other UK countries refer to all their sites as “National Nature Reserves”. They do not distinguish between those formally declared as NNRs and those declared under their original powers as “Nature Reserves”. Since the drafting of the common principles for National Nature Reserves (2010), there are now variations in approach across countries depending upon local legislation and policy. Under the current English and Scottish models, NNRs are sites of national importance but only designated where the site is a ‘people destination’ which contributes to the economy and public well-being. Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) takes the approach that only sites delivering public benefit through well-resourced access infrastructure are declared as NNR. Consequently some sites that meet the essential criteria have been de-designated. This has resulted in fewer NNRs but the overall area has now increased and NNRs are marketed as sites for the public to visit. The de-designated sites may, however, remain under conservation management by SNH or others.

The lack of activity over designating NNRs means that Northern Ireland (NI) lags behind other UK countries in the completeness of its suite of NNRs. There are currently 353 NNRs nationally, 224 in England, 76 in Wales, now only 41 in Scotland, and 12 in Northern Ireland - relatively few in comparison to England and Wales, though comparable when statutory NRs (37) are included.

**3.1.3 Current position on (N)NRs in NI.**

The current position with regard to nature reserves in Northern Ireland is as follows:

* In the UK (N)NRs are no longer the primary protective legal instrument for nature conservation, this now being ASSIs/SSSIs, SACs, SPAs and Ramsar Wetlands.
* The Habitats and Birds Directives determine that the management and reporting on SACs and SPAs (the Natura 2000 Network abbreviated as N2K) and on ASSIs, including Article 11 and 17 reporting, are a high priority within the Natural Heritage agenda. Nature Reserves are, however, no longer used as units for reporting outside local business units, though their management will contribute to reporting on favourable management of those N2K sites which include (N)NRs.
* Within NI there is now a focus on SACs and SPAs as units of management and there is significant pressure on NIEA to deliver suitable SAC management arrangements. Planning for and delivering SAC management is one of the highest priorities within EMFG. Several (N)NRs lie within SACs or SPAs, increasing the priority for their management.
* Though the current suite of sites managed as Nature Reserves represents an important reservoir of biodiversity, declaration as (N)NR is not essential to enable NIEA or other landowners to manage and protect their lands for biodiversity. This can result from declaration as ASSI, SAC and SPA.
* It is likely that lands managed as nature reserves are in more favourable condition or under more favourable management than lands merely designated as ASSI. As no scientific study has been carried out to investigate this, it could be the subject of academic research.

## 3.2 Enabling Legislation

## 3.2.1 Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Northern Ireland) Order 1985.

The current enabling legislation for establishing and managing both NRs and NNRs in Northern Ireland is the **Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Northern Ireland) Order 1985** as amended 1989, 2002 & 2013 (NCALO) but there is no statutory requirement for DAERA to declare more sites.

**Part I, Interpretation** **Article 2** defines a “nature reserve” as *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.*

**Part II** of the Order empowers the Department to establish and manage nature reserves, to carry out research, disseminate information on reserves and their management, and to provide for and promote public access to its nature reserves.

**Part III, Article 6** of the Order relates to the acquisition, by agreement or vesting, and disposal of lands and empowers the Department to acquire lands for management as a nature reserve, for passing them on to others to manage and for their disposal if no longer being managed as a nature reserve.

**Part V** of the Order relates specifically to statutory nature reserves. It sets out the processes for consulting on[[1]](#footnote-1), acquiring and declaring both nature reserves and national nature reserves, for entering into nature reserve agreements over lands owned by others and for making byelaws for the protection of nature reserves. Anylands managed as a nature reserve and meeting the selection criteria (see Chapter 5) can receive the appropriate accolade as (N)NR.

The full text of the Order relating to nature reserves is provided as **Appendix 5**.

**3.2.2 The Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (NI) 2011** introduced a ‘Duty to Conserve Biodiversity’. Section 1 reads: *It is the duty of every public body, in exercising any functions, to further the conservation of biodiversity so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions*. This legislation commits all Government departments in the exercise of their functions to conserve biodiversity, including doing so through the management of their estates.

## 3.3 Nature Reserves in the Planning Process

Designation as Nature Reserve or National Nature Reserve provides protection through the **Planning Process**.  (N)NRs are part of a continuum of protected sites from Sites of Local Nature Conservation Interest (SLNCI) and Local Nature Reserves through ASSI, Ramsar and N2K to World Heritage Site.

The **Strategic Planning Policy Statement** (SPPS) was published in September 2015. This, together with **Planning Policy Statement 2**, affords protection to areas subject to statutory nature conservation designations including (N)NRs. The policies in PPS2 will be superseded by policies in the new Local Development Plans of each individual Council once these are adopted.

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. However DAERA does not have to be consulted over any impacts of development proposals on (N)NRs per se under the Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 2015 (as amended). <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2016/115/made>. However consultation will occur in most cases as (N)NRs are also ASSIs and many are SACs or SPAs and these designations trigger consultation with DAERA.

Details of the planning policy towards and protection afforded to lands designated for nature conservation by SPPS and PPS2 are set out in **Appendix 6**, which also addresses the protection under planning policy for Local Nature Reserves.

## 3.4 Nature Reserves in the Context of Related Government Strategies

Nature reserves contribute to the delivery of several government strategies.

**3.4.1 Regional Development Strategy - RDS 35 - Building a Better Future**

In its ***Regional Development Strategy - RDS 35 - Building a Better Future***, published in 2010, the Northern Ireland Government re-affirmed its commitment at a strategic level, to ***conserve, protect and, where possible, enhance ... our natural* environment**, which is described as: *a unique asset; sustaining* Northern Ireland’s *landscape and biological diversity* which *also makes a small but significant contribution to protecting a much wider ecosystem which sustains life on earth. We therefore have a responsibility to protect and enhance this asset for the benefit of future generations*. While not specifically referring to nature reserves, it commits to enhancing biodiversity and to: ***Identify, establish, protect and manage ecological networks*.** *Ecological networks, including the protection of priority species, are needed to maintain environmental processes and help to conserve and enhance biodiversity.*

The RDS also commits to reducing our carbon footprint and facilitate mitigation and adaption to climate change by protecting may habitats which act as sinks and stores for carbon if undisturbed including peat bogs.

*A well established ecological network,* ***including designated sites****, should provide the habitats needed for ecosystems and species populations to survive in an increasingly human dominated landscape. Such networks could also be of amenity value if linked to the green infrastructure provided by walking and cycle routes to heritage and other recreational interest.*  Nature reserves are high among the designated sites contributing to the conservation and protection of Northern Ireland’s landscapes, biodiversity and amenity infrastructure.

**3.4.2 Sustainable Development Strategy**

**I**n 2010 the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister published a revised ***Sustainable Development Strategy***[[2]](#footnote-2) with the vision of a Northern Ireland with ‘*a peaceful, fair, prosperous and sustainable society*’. It aspires to ensuring *a high level of protection and improvement of the quality of the environment* and adopts *living with environmental limits* as one of the six guiding principles. This expresses a goal of *respecting the limits of the planet’s environmental resources and biodiversity – to protect and improve our environment and ensure that our natural resources are unimpaired and remain so for future generations.*

Nature reserves alone cannot adequately conserve all our natural biodiversity but they do represent a reservoir from which native plants and animals can colonise surrounding habitat and where they can be studied.

Strategic Objective 4 is *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,* with an ongoing commitment to *halt biodiversity loss* to which nature reserves make a significant contribution. Section 8, *Working Together*, recognises that *we need to involve the private and voluntary/community sectors and civic society, as well as government, in partnership.* This is relevant to the management of (N)NRs where owners seek to involve communities and voluntary groups in management.

**3.4.3 The Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy**

The first Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy (NIBS) was developed by the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Group and approved in 2002. A revised NIBS[[3]](#footnote-3) was published in 2015. Its vision is: *by 2050, our life support system, nature, is protected and restored for its own sake, its essential contribution to our well-being and prosperity, and to avert catastrophic changes likely to arise from its loss.* Its mission will be: *To make progress towards halting overall biodiversity loss, establish an ecosystem approach and help business and society in general have a greater understanding of the benefits that nature can bring to everyday life in Northern Ireland.* The management of nature reserves can make a direct contribution to these aims and can demonstrate appropriate land management practice.

The NIBS stresses the importance of adopting an ecosystem approach, which the Convention on Biodiversity[[4]](#footnote-4) defines as: *A strategy for the integrated management of land, water and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way*. It identifies eight important ecosystems as follows:

* Mountains, moorlands and heaths;
* Woodlands
* Semi-natural grasslands
* Enclosed farmlands
* Open waters and wetlands
* Urban
* Coastal margins
* Marine

The NIBS states that *A key feature of the ecosystem approach is involving people, businesses and communities in the nature that surrounds them and encouraging them to realise how dependent they are upon its health.* *The adoption of a partnership approach is key to this.* Environmental NGOs are understood to *play a significant role in all aspects of nature conservation...*including*...managing nature reserves...*and... *encouraging public participation in practical biodiversity projects*.

A series of sites protected and managed for nature will greatly contribute to the core of the NIBS. All these sites are managed by professional conservation management staff to maintain and enhance the nature conservation interest.

Giving appropriate sites National Nature Reserve status will assist in providing the connectivity to communities and engaging with the public.

## 3.5 Nature Reserves delivering DAERA and NIEA targets.

The current NIEA Business Plan (2016-17) identifies the DAERA strategic outcome as

***A clean, healthy environment, benefiting people, nature and the economy***.

The ***Natural Heritage 2020 Vision and Strategic Plan*** defines the agenda for the Natural Heritage in the next decade. Among the outcomes to which it aspires are:

1. *A Well Protected Natural Environment*

*A functioning network of* ***protected sites*** *and areas representative of our landscapes, habitats and species, through:*

* *designation of land and water;*
* *protection of species;*
* *conserving marine features and ecosystems.*

1. *A Healthy Natural Environment*

*Sustaining diverse landscapes and a rich biodiversity and delivering ecosystem services in a changing environment through:*

* + *delivery of biodiversity action;*
  + *maintaining local landscape character and quality;*
  + *management of habitats;*
  + *monitoring of biological resources.*

*Which people will:*

1. *Value*

* *Through interpretation to promote understanding;*
* *By educating and inspiring.*

1. *Respect*

* *Through promotion of sustainable development;*
* *Through compliance with environmental regulation.*

1. *Enjoy*

* *Through provision of countryside access and recreation;*
* *By encouraging closeness to and engagement with nature.*

(N)NRs make a contribution towards these five Natural Heritage outcomes.

# 4. Vision, aims and objectives

NIEA has defined its vision for statutory nature reserves, its aims and objectives for their use and management.

## 4.1 The NIEA vision for Nature Reserves

***A suite of Nature Reserves and National Nature Reserves reflecting the natural heritage of Northern Ireland, contributing to its protection and managed, using best practice, to conserve and showcase features of interest for the benefit of present and future generations.***

## 4.2 Aims

1. ***Utilise Nature Reserves and National Nature Reserves to maximise the delivery of the Government‘s responsibilities and targets for conserving the natural heritage of Northern Ireland under National, European and other International obligations.***
2. ***Maintain a series of Nature Reserves which reflects the range of major habitat types, earth science strata and landforms in Northern Ireland with at least one good example of each as NNR and manage them to an exemplary standard.***
3. ***Use Nature Reserves to further our understanding of ecosystem functions which contribute to a healthy and resilient wider environment in Northern Ireland.***
4. ***Maximise the public benefit deriving from the nature reserve series.***

## 4.3 Objectives

In pursuit of these aims and the realisation of the vision, NIEA has identified the following over-arching objective:

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This will be delivered through the following sub-objectives:

1. declare (as resources allow) any new or extended (N)NRs to recognise their contribution to achieving NI’s Biodiversity targets by providing reservoirs for biodiversity;
2. recognise the supporting role Nature Reserves can play in the programme of ASSI, SAC and SPA declaration, monitoring and management through having direct management control with the scope to develop and demonstrate best management practice;
3. provide opportunities for the public to experience natural habitats and landscape features and to interact with our native flora and fauna, where it is appropriate and practicable to do so, and, though visiting reserves, through publications and on-line information, to increase understanding and appreciation of the environment and public commitment to its protection and enhancement;
4. de-declare sites that no longer meet the essential criteria.

## 4.4 Review

The Policy Position Statement and status of the existing (N)NR suite is to be reviewed at least every 10 years and before 2026, or sooner if changes to other legislative frameworks require it.

# 5. Site selection

## 5.1 Selection process

Under NCALO Article 16, the Department can declare as a statutory nature reserve any land acquired for management as a nature reserve, and also land for which a suitable agreement is established and which is being appropriately managed (see **Appendix 5**).

Article 18 allows for the declaration of National Nature Reserves where that land is of ‘national importance, the criteria for which generally coincide with those for ASSI selection, as set out in ***Guidelines for the selection of Biological ASSIs in Northern Ireland***[[5]](#footnote-5)*.* These take account of: *Extent, Diversity, Naturalness, Rarity, Fragility, Typicalness, Recorded History, Position in Ecological/ Geographical Unit, Potential Value, and Intrinsic Appeal* and use *a combined system of minimum standards and exemplary sites....*with....*the “best” examples from each area of search...chosen as exemplary sites (usually the largest); a further set of sites are then chosen where these come above a clearly defined set of minimum criteria.* For some species, notably birds, qualifying numbers are set for national and international importance.

In selecting those sites suitable for declaration and retention as statutory nature reserves, primarily from the ASSI suite, and in determining which of those should be given (N)NR accreditation, NIEA will adopt a pragmatic approach, working in partnership with approved bodies (as defined under NCALO Article 18(3)) and with local authorities, and will be advised by the Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside (CNCC) (see **Appendix 4**: Flow Chart of statutory Nature Reserves (NNR & NR) selection process).

Further sites will be selected for (N)NR declaration only where doing so brings added public benefits beyond those secured through other existing instruments (ASSI, SAC, SPA, etc.).

# 5.2 Common Core Principles for the Selection of National Nature Reserves

The following 10 Core Principles were developed in 2009/10 in consultation with Country Agencies across the UK. Though other Country Agencies have varied from them they are still applied in Northern Ireland.

1. **NNRs must be of NATIONAL IMPORTANCE**

They must support wildlife or earth science features that are of national importance – in practice most NNRs support features that are internationally important, e.g. Natura 2000, Ramsar and Biosphere sites.

***Note:*** *Northern Ireland only: ‘National Importance’ implies importance at a Northern Ireland level as opposed to UK or all-Ireland level.*

1. **The primary land use of NNRs is for NATURE CONSERVATION**

The over-riding purpose of NNRs is to secure and assure their management for nature conservation. They represent a very important reservoir of natural biodiversity and examples of its rich geodiversity, the conservation of which is paramount.

1. **NNRs will be managed to the highest standards, they will be EXEMPLARS OF ‘GOOD PRACTICE’ IN CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT**

NNRs must be managed to the highest possible standard for nature conservation, access, recreation and interpretation.

***Note:*** *Northern Ireland only: where resources for management are limited, NNRs will be prioritised over NRs.*

1. **NNRs will be areas where the necessary management can be assured over a long period; they will have LONG TERM SURETY**

It must be possible to continue to implement the necessary management of NNRs for the foreseeable future. In addition the NNRs must form a viable management unit (in so far as it is possible to define such parameters).

***Note:*** *Northern Ireland only: while essential for NNRs, lack of such long-term surety will not necessarily preclude NR declaration where, for example, only a shorter-term management agreement can be secured.*

1. **NNRs will provide opportunities for STUDY and RESEARCH**

NNRs provide opportunities for scientific recording, study and research into the natural environment, and for developing direct practical experience of a wide range of land management practices including trial of new and innovative management techniques.

***Note:*** *Individual proposals for study or research will be subjected to appropriate assessment and any deemed likely to cause damage, deterioration or disturbance to the conservation of the designation features will be disallowed.*

*While the primary function of NNRs is to provide special places reserved for nature, many NNRs can also contribute to other agendas. The remaining Core Principles (6-10) address this so most are prefixed ‘where appropriate’. Such additional uses must not adversely impact upon Core Principles 1-5; for example, visitor access would not necessarily be encouraged where it is likely to cause disturbance to a breeding bird population of National Importance.*

1. **Where appropriate - NNRs will provide opportunities for PUBLIC ACCESS, appreciation and enjoyment of the countryside for people of all abilities**

Where appropriate and practicable public access, appreciation and enjoyment of nature, including provisions for people of all abilities, should be encouraged, so raising awareness and inspiring more people to engage with and value the natural environment. This will also contribute to public health and wellbeing.

1. **Where appropriate - NNRs will provide opportunities for INTERPRETATION, EDUCATION and learning for all and DEMONSTRATION of good conservation management practice**

Where appropriate the use of NNRs for interpretation, education and learning for all should be encouraged and used to foster greater public appreciation of the value of the environment. In addition some NNRs may also provide opportunities to demonstrate best practice management techniques to the managers of similar sites (see Chapter 7.4).

1. **Where appropriate - NNRs will act as a focus for encouraging STAKEHOLDER & LOCAL COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT in conservation land management, so fostering a sense of value and shared ownership.**

Where appropriate, local communities and other stakeholders should be encouraged to take an active role in the management of NNRs, so promoting a sense of value, shared ownership, an appreciation of the value of the environment and a sense of pride in the sites.

1. **NNRs will be managed by the most appropriate bodies, which may involve STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS**

The management of NNRs may be delivered directly by Country Agencies, by non-government organisations (NGOs) for example Wildlife Trusts, or other Approved Bodies (which may include private landowners), or indeed through partnerships between these various bodies.

***Note:*** *It is likely that a number of different ‘approved bodies’ will be involved in management across the full suite of NNRs. In selecting the best management option for individual NNRs, consideration will be given to criteria such as value for money, expertise, management capacity, proximity to a management base, and community or stakeholder involvement. To ensure that high management standards are maintained, ‘approved body status’ will be accorded only to bodies meeting strict competence criteria.*

1. **So far as is reasonably possible - NNRs will contribute to LOCAL ECONOMIES and deliver SOCIAL JUSTICE**

Where possible NNRs should contribute towards local economies, e.g. by encouraging tourism to a locality, and promoting social justice e.g. by making provisions for people of all abilities to visit the reserve.

In applying these principles to Northern Ireland, all the requirements of principles i to v must be met for a site to qualify for NNR status. There must also be ‘added value’ in terms of public benefit so an NNR must contribute significantly to at least one of principles vi to x, especially as a site for public to visit and enjoy. Statutory NRs need not exhibit features of national importance so can include and provide protection under planning requirements for sites being developed for nature conservation which is stronger than that for local nature reserves. NRs must, however, meet criteria ii to v and at least one of principles vi to x.

DAERA has powers to enter into Nature Reserve management agreements which can include payments to landowners (see 7.4).

## 5.3 Priority habitats

The Schedules of the EU Habitats Directive identify habitats present within the EU which are to be given priority for conservation. The NIBS affirms that *ASSIs form a network of sites that provide protection for Northern Ireland’s remarkable bio- and geo-diversity and aim to safeguard these special places for present and future generations. The ASSI programme has now reached the phase where a greater emphasis will be placed on managing existing sites while maintaining progress towards completion of the site network.*

While the most reliable mechanism for ensuring appropriate management is through nature reserve status, it is impracticable to manage all ASSIs as (N)NRs The NR series should, when completed, reflect the range of major habitat types: coastlands, woodlands and scrub, lowland heathlands, grasslands, freshwater habitats, peatlands and uplands habitats across a wide geographic spread.

The Enabling legislation no longer provides for the establishment of sub-littoral marine habitats as marine nature reserves. Instead special marine areas can be managed under Part 3 of the Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013 as Marine Conservation Zones and are not addressed further in this Policy.

## 5.4 Earth science

The Earth Science Conservation Review (ESCR) provides a suitable framework for assessing and selecting geological and geomorphological sites as (N)NRs. It covers the full geodiversity of Northern Ireland at a very detailed level. Given that earth science sites generally require minimal intervention the main purpose of designation is to enable study and education rather than exemplary management. Preference will be given to earth science sites displaying multiple geological features.

## 5.4 Rare and threatened species

Where necessary, NIEA will consider the establishment of nature reserves to increase the habitat resource managed specifically for rare and threatened native species including plants, insects and other invertebrates, the necessary ‘niche’ management being easier to deliver in reserves than on privately owned land. Properties owned and/or appropriately managed as (N)NRs generally offer the best means of addressing the needs of sensitive species such as breeding waders, the management requirements for which often require detailed management prescriptions.

Where declaration as (N)NR of a site important for such vulnerable native species proves to be impracticable NIEA will consider whether the species can be protected by translocation, following best practice guidelines, to nature reserves where the habitat can be managed specifically for their needs while also seeking to maintain them at their original locations.

## 5.5 Landscape and Culture

The importance of conserving nature at a ‘landscape scale’ is widely recognised. Nature Reserves often represent small 'islands' of relative stability within a landscape of more rapid change. Large reserves and reserves set within larger areas designated as ASSI, SAC or SPA tend to be more resilient than small ones. Where reserves are in close proximity, acquiring intervening land or corridors linking sites is desirable, as these provide greater opportunity for wildlife to move safely between core areas.

NIEA has worked with the Woodland Trust towards creating an area of landscape-scale seminatural woodland in the Faughan Valley centred around NIEA’s Ness and Ervey Woods NNR (which lies within Ness Country Park to which NIEA has added additional planting) and the Woodland Trust’s Killaloo Wood. To these the Woodland Trust has added Oaks Wood, Burntollet Wood and is now planting Brackfield Wood as its First World War Centenary Wood commemorating Ireland’s fallen from that conflict. It has plans to acquire further land to link all these woods.

Nature Reserves may be valued by local people for the way in which they contribute to the 'sense of place' or landscape and cultural heritage of an area. They often include features that add to the landscape quality of the wider area. Thus they have value, not only for the particular attributes for which they have been designated as (N)NRs but also for the contribution they make to their landscape setting, making them attractive to film-makers.

Where nature reserves lie within an AONB, they add to the natural heritage element of the opportunities afforded by this designation, which, under Article 14.(5) of the NCALO, enables the Department to formulate proposals for:

* conserving or enhancing the natural beauty or amenities of that area;
* conserving wildlife, historic objects or natural phenomena within it;
* promoting its enjoyment by the public; and
* providing or maintaining public access to it.

Nature reserves can contribute to some or all of these aims by ‘making space for nature’. Local authority access officers may be able to advise how public access within a nature reserve can best be linked to other public access within the Council area, while NIEA can advise on how such access can be managed so as not to affect the scientific interest of the reserve.

(N)NRs form one component in the tapestry of land holdings that collectively make up each of Northern Ireland's 130 Landscape Character Areas. Nature Reserves, although most are relatively small and isolated, can act as core areas which are crucial to successful biodiversity conservation in the wider landscape.

In a small number of cases ‘National Importance’ may be accorded for historic reasons. Though the intrinsic scientific interest may be unexceptional, the site may have been declared because of iconic significance in the development of scientific understanding or of the nature conservation movement. In such cases management will recognise and seek to protect such heritage attributes. An example of such a site is Portrush NNR where, though the geology itself is not exceptional and the ammonite fossils are of indifferent quality, the site is of international importance because of its significance in the history of the understanding of the formation of igneous and sedimentary rocks.

## 5.6 ‘Future natural’

It is acknowledged that, with modern engineering, some habitats suitable for conservation, particularly wetland habitats, can be created. Examples include the Quoile Pondage NR, now a fresh water environment with fringing swamp and wet woodland which resulted from the exclusion of the sea from two kilometres of the Quoile Estuary by a barrage built in 1957, and Hollymount NNR, a fen/wet woodland also originally estuary, resulting from the construction of a series of earlier Quoile barrages built between 1745 and 1934.

NIEA will consider the impacts of continued succession on current sites, identify habitats and species that are vulnerable and investigate whether innovative solutions and/or site extensions are necessary to ensure long term conservation management.

For example, it may be more economic to secure green-field, brown-field or open water sites to replicate an early stage in the succession than it would be to continue artificially to manage current sites which are now at a late stage in the seral succession and where that succession, if allowed to progress, will produce another habitat valuable for nature conservation.

One of the principles of the Ecosystem Approach is that *Management must recognise that change is inevitable.* In light of this, consideration may also be given to the changes in management at a landscape scale.

Some current sites of conservation importance are merely isolated remnants in an agricultural landscape where previous management actions are still influencing the habitat. In such circumstances it may be appropriate to declare intervening lands, restore the former management regime and allow the fauna and flora of the relict habitat areas to return. Where this is not possible by agricultural subsidies, the establishment and management of these lands as nature reserves may be the best approach.

Selection and designation as a Nature Reserve can give ‘future natural’ sites the recognition and protection they require if they are to develop as sites important for nature conservation in the process of time.

## 5.7 Climate Change

It will also be important to anticipate the impacts of climate change, which is expected to result in sea level rise with consequent ‘coastal squeeze’ on habitats such as saltmarsh. Providing for coastal retreat by acquiring and re-flooding reclaimed farmland may help to mitigate this loss and provide future nature reserves. Migration of species favouring cooler conditions northwards and upwards is also expected, creating a potential requirement for reserves further north and at high altitudes. (See also 7.3.2)

## 5.8 Acquisition and disposal

NIEA will seek to have a balanced portfolio of sites. Only where there are habitats, species or earth science interests that are not represented in the current suite of publicly owned land, will the Agency seek to establish new (N)NRs on private land by agreement with the landowner. NIEA does have compulsory purchase powers[[6]](#footnote-6) and will, if absolutely essential, use these to achieve strategic management of sites, for example to achieve hydrological control over a wetland.

It is considered that, where new acquisitions are being considered, the greatest benefit generally can be derived from enlarging and ideally linking existing reserves. NIEA will consult CNCC as strategic approaches to extending the (N)NR portfolio are developed.

# 6. Declaration

NIEA will work in consultation with owners, approved bodies and CNCC to select potential (N)NRs and agree those to be put forward for declaration.

## 6.1 Declaration package

The declaration documents include:

* a declaration document with the name for the site.
* a map showing the precise area to be declared;
* the size of the area to be declared in hectares;
* a grid reference for the centre of the site;

## 6.2 Declaration process

The proposal for (N)NR is first presented to members of the Natural Environment Directorate of NIEA. If the proposed declaration is accepted, the advice of CNCC is then sought as required by Article 15 of the NCALO. NIEA will take account of any feedback from CNCC in determining whether to proceed with the designation. The NCALO requires that NIEA notifies the relevant local authority of the proposed declaration.

Having followed the above procedures, the declaration document is signed and dated by the Director of Natural Environment.

## 6.3 De-declaration process

Where sites no longer meet the five essential principles and there is no scope for remediation, they will be considered for de-declaration. The primary reasons for de-declaring a (N)NR generally will be:

* loss of or reassessment of the features on which the original declaration was justified; or
* loss of tenure or termination of a management agreement over the land, or
* where the declaration affords no added value over designation as ASSI

While there is no statutory obligation to do so, NIEA will inform CNCC of its intention to de-declare any (N)NRs with an explanation as to why this is necessary.

## 6.4 Notifications

It is important that other public bodies and the general public are then notified of each change to a (N)NR declaration. Changes include:

* declaration of new sites;
* extensions to existing sites;
* a change to the body managing all or part of a site; and
* de-declaration of a site.

The following actions shall be taken to notify changes:

* DAERA will consult with owners to ensure that any changes to consents for operations are understood
* DAERA will publish an online public notice, on its website
* The NIEA GIS and other databases will be updated
* The DAERA, NI Direct and DiscoverNI websites will be updated.
* The Central Government Planning Group will be advised and a boundary map will be uploaded to the Planning Portal.
* Land and Property Services (LPS), including Ordnance Survey, will be notified and provided with a map of the (N)NR.
* CNCC will be sent a link to the public notice.
* The relevant local authority will be notified, and provided with the declaration document to update its planning database.
* Third parties with a ‘stakeholder’ interest will be notified and provided with the declaration document.
* DAERA staff will be notified through the team brief and intranet.
* A press release will be issued through the Department’s Press Office.

The Owner or management body for the site should seek to inform all near neighbours, community organisations and other stakeholders of changes to the declaration.

# 7. Management

**Management principles**

Nature Reserve owners and managers should generally allow either the natural processes to continue or maintain the ‘traditional’ agricultural practices upon which the (N)NR selection features depend, except where this would be detrimental to the habitats or species features which are protected under the NIBS and / or the Habitats and Birds Directives, which should always take precedence. NIEA will provide habitat-specific advice to land managers as appropriate.

NIEA recognises the value of natural habitats in providing ecosystem services and will seek to ensure that all Nature Reserve owners and managers are aware of their value. However biodiversity will be considered the most important service where there may be conflicts or trades-off.

Those sites that are managed as nature reserves are important for the development of experience in managing land for conservation in Northern Ireland, necessary not just to conserve their features but also to determine and demonstrate best practice and to provide sound advice to others. NIEA places great value on the contribution made to the reserve series by approved bodies which managing reserve sites. Their work contributes significantly to the delivery of both national and international objectives in the protection of biodiversity.

The considerations of management set out below follow the order in which the common core principles for NNRs are set out in Chapter 6; these principles are largely applicable to all statutory NRs.

## 7.1 Management for features of national importance

Acknowledging the link between features in the ecological food web, management to secure favourable condition of the features for which a reserve qualifies for Natura 2000 status should be accorded the highest priority in the allocation of management resources, followed by management for features accorded ASSI status only. These will take precedence over management for any features not cited in the Natura 2000 or ASSI declaration documentation, should there be a conflict.

## 7.2 Nature conservation as the primary land use

Management for nature conservation will be the primary land use on statutory nature reserves, although not necessarily the sole purpose of management. One of the benefits of declaration is the opportunity it affords to manage the site for a much wider range of scientific interests and public benefits than merely to manage exclusively for the nationally important features specified in the ASSI or Natura 2000 citations. For example, small areas may be managed to favour individual invertebrate species.

Habitat and Species Action Plans developed as part of the NIBS are now an additional influence on the selection and management of statutory nature reserves. Diversity of interest often adds to the educational value of a reserve.

Some nature reserves include prominent and highly valued landscape features with long traditions of public enjoyment. Any conflicting demands between public use and site features should accept the over-riding requirement to conserve the declaration features.

NIEA is satisfied that management for features of minor scientific interest, for landscape conservation and for environmental education and enjoyment of nature all lie within the broad compass of ‘management primarily for nature conservation’.

## 7.3 The capacity to deliver management of a high standard

**7.3.1 Management plans**

It is recognised that NNRs are often part of other management units and it may not be sensible to duplicate management documents. All sites managed for nature conservation should be the subject of a management plan to achieve continuity and stability of management and to provide audit assurance for the resources involved.

In developing nature reserve management plans, NIEA asks managers to consider delivery against the ten core principles outlined in Section 6. The plans should ensure that appropriate opportunities are taken to optimise the benefit for native biodiversity and geodiversity. Heritage management features are not confined to those for which the reserve may have been designated as ASSI, SAC or SPA, and may include features of local importance. Depending on the level of public access to the site there may also be features addressing public access, information and education, recreation and culture.

In addition, many sites will be located within a wider landscape that may be designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty; in such cases, managers are asked to consider the AONB management plans to determine if management of the nature reserve can also benefit the wider landscape. AONB plans should also encompass the need for appropriate management of any (N)NRs they contain.

There are landscape management and development recommendations for every Landscape Character area in Northern Ireland (see <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/doe/land-consultation-northern-ireland-regional-landscape-character-assessment-draft-report-2015.pdf> ).

NIEA does not constrain approved bodies managing statutory nature reserves to follow a single plan format but does expect the site to be the subject of a plan. A plan should have site description, feature evaluation / management rationale, and project register sections, take account of ASSI condition assessments, the NIBS and relevant Biodiversity Action Plans, and should be reviewed regularly.

(N)NR management plans for sites in the Natura 2000 network will be subjected to an appropriate Habitats Regulations Assessment and, provided all proposed management activities contribute to the maintenance of the declaration features or do not harm them, the plan will be assented/consented without need for assenting/consenting the projects set out on an individual basis. Any subsequent projects not in the management plan would need individual assent/consent.

**7.3.2 Climate change** (see also 5.7)

The 2009 NIBG report into the implementation of the first NIBS highlighted the need to build climate change into all biodiversity work, helping biodiversity to adapt, adjust and survive. The report concluded that *Northern Ireland’s suite of protected sites, though still needing further designation and management work, can (together with agri-environment measures) protect our most specialised, vulnerable and localised species and habitats. They should be maintained and strengthened…. A new landscape scale approach is needed, that integrates the needs of farming and rural communities, site protection and habitat restoration, allowing our landscape and biodiversity to adjust to the pressures of human use and the spatial shifts caused by climate change.*

The current NIBS[[7]](#footnote-7), page 18 points out that “*climate change is one of the most serious environmental threats globally. Its consequences can include flooding, famine, drought, rising sea levels and ultimately, even the extinction of species. While Northern Ireland is likely to avoid some of the most severe direct impacts manifesting in some other regions, there will be impacts, both direct and indirect, on biodiversity. The general prediction of hotter, drier summers and warmer, wetter winters may well be accompanied by increases in extreme weather events ...*with ...*an increased risk of flooding and coastal erosion ...increased temperature, increased pollution and poorer air quality ...*which ...*may bring discomfort to vulnerable and threatened species of animals and plants, including crops.”*

A 2002 Report (see <http://climate.arm.ac.uk/publications/ni_climate_change.pdf>) entitled ***Implications of Climate Change for Northern Ireland: Informing Strategy Development*** by a consortium comprising Queen’s University Belfast, Napier University, Edinburgh and Centre for the Study of Environmental Change and Sustainability, University of Edinburgh concludes: *by the 2080s mean annual precipitation increases by up to 13%, with winter enhancement of up to 22% and similar increases in autumn. Summer precipitation is estimated to decline by up to 7%. Inter-annual variability in precipitation increases in all seasons and is greatest in autumn. Daily precipitation intensities are expected to increase in both summer and winter.*

*Overall gale frequency declines, but very severe winter storms are expected to increase.*

*These climate change scenarios are anticipated to result from greenhouse gas forcing of the climate system. It is important to note that natural climate variability will affect this human induced climate change.*

NIEA will work collectively with approved bodies to address any implications of climate change on existing site selection features and boundaries. NIEA will

1. encourage the management of (N)NRs as demonstrations of best practice in conservation in relation to climate change. This will involve measures addressing both adaptation and mitigation and will necessitate the review and amendment of existing management plans and agreements and incorporation of adaptive measures into any new agreements.
2. NIEA will also seek to reduce pressures on sensitive sites from surrounding land-use and to reduce their ecological isolation. Previous examples are habitat creation adjacent to Ness & Ervey Woods and Breen Wood where the ecological isolation has been reduced by encouraging afforestation of adjacent lands with native broadleaved trees by Woodland Trust and Forest Service respectively.

**7.3.3 Resource priorities**

NIEA will continue to liaise with the other country agencies and eNGOS over management practice and will encourage adoption of best practice, where appropriate to NI, as this develops.

Managers face many constraints in delivering the optimum management for a site. These can include: limitations imposed by lack of full tenure; external influences which may, at a local or global level, alter the hydrology, water or air quality or climate; and the availability of equipment, staffing or financial resources to implement the management plan. Where resources are inadequate, priority should be given to management which, if neglected, will lead to irreversible undesirable changes such as feature loss.

Ambitions to carry out scientific research and monitoring have to be considered in the real context of sourcing funding to deliver such research.

**7.3.4 Monitoring**

It is very important from an auditing perspective to ensure that management objectives are being met, good site condition is being maintained and that management is also delivering value for money and operating accountably.

Monitoring and management go hand in hand. On an individual site basis, management planning decisions are informed in a feedback loop through the monitoring of the way site features respond to existing management.

Many (N)NRs are compartments within larger Natura 2000 or ASSI sites for which the only specific plan to monitor feature condition may be the six-year rolling programme for assessing and reporting overall N2K feature and wider countryside condition to the EU. Where the (N)NR is a compartment within larger land units and this six-year Common Standards Monitoring monitoring covers the whole site, the monitoring results will have to be interrogated to obtain information specific to the (N)NR management unit. The assessment of feature condition will be for the whole site. This may be recorded as ‘unfavourable’ even when the condition of the features in the (N)NR management unit is ‘favourable’. The (N)NR plan may be seeking to manage for additional features not cited for the Natura 2000 site or ASSI and which the six-year monitoring may not record. If the six-year cycle of ‘Common Standards Monitoring’ by NIEA proves inadequate to inform the management of an (N)NR, any additional monitoring required should be specified in the management plan.

## 7.4 Long-term surety

Long-term tenure through ownership or agreement is highly desirable for all NRs and is an essential requirement for declaring a reserve as a NNR. Ownership can lie with NIEA, with an ‘approved body’ or with a third party which has made a long-term agreement (envisaged as 20-25 years for NNRs) on management, either with NIEA or with an ‘approved body’.

NIEA will seek the long-term conservation of the features of nature reserves by:

* site extension where this would increase long-term sustainability of feature populations;
* increasing the area or diversity of the core habitat under management;
* providing a more viable management unit, generally through adding adjacent land;
* reducing undesirable external influences and / or protecting against them;
* mitigating against or adjusting to climate change and anticipated sea level rise;
* providing opportunities for habitat restoration and species recovery; and / or
* providing opportunities for trialing innovative land management techniques to achieve specific biodiversity or feature interest gains.

## 7.5 Study and research

Under NCALO, NIEA is empowered to commission or support research or evidence gathering relevant to the establishment, maintenance and management of statutory nature reserves. In addition, research institutions often require for field studies the stable, controlled conditions and predictable management regimes that nature reserves can offer. They view such sites as suitable areas for fundamental research, applied research and long-term monitoring of site management practice. Consequently many third level institutions, including both of the Universities in Northern Ireland, currently make use of statutory nature reserves in this respect.

NIEA will continue to encourage research in support of reserve management and will facilitate relevant research by appropriate institutions and individuals where possible. Also NIEA will encourage approved bodies to facilitate relevant research and recording at their (N)NRs. NIEA will seek to develop and maintain a publically accessible database listing research beneficial to conservation management.

NIEA recognises the role that statutory nature reserves can play in contributing research opportunities in the context of management of the wider countryside and will continue, as far as possible, to facilitate such demands through making available as diverse a range of sites as possible to assist with the planning of such research.

NIEA is also aware that statutory nature reserves are frequented by amateur naturalists (many of whom are taxonomic experts) who make an essential contribution to the recording of specialist groups of flora and fauna. NIEA encourages all records to be submitted to a local recording group or preferably directly to the *Centre for Environmental Data and Recording* (CEDaR), the Local Records Centre for Northern Ireland which facilitates the collection, collation, management and dissemination of biodiversity and geodiversity information for Northern Ireland and its coastal waters. The internet link to CeDAR is <http://www.nmni.com/cedar>.

Those (N)NRs which exhibit high species diversity also provide excellent training grounds in habitat and species identification and recording for professional scientists and budding citizen scientists alike. Training at (N)NRs can also be used to emphasise good practice regarding the taking of specimens, which should be limited to the minimum required for scientific verification.

## 7.6 Public access

**7.6.1 Appropriate access**

Suitable public access for walking and the quiet enjoyment and study of nature at those nature reserves where tenure arrangements allow may be developed at a level that each site can sustain without compromising its nature conservation features. The nature conservation objectives have primacy in statutory nature reserves and use of these sites for the study and quiet enjoyment of nature is promoted only to a level compatible with the need to protect and manage their citation features.

In addition to providing information on the DAERA and Discover NI websites, where reserves afford the visitor with good countryside walks, these can be promoted through the Walk NI website.

By providing pleasant environments for walking in the countryside Nature Reserves may also contribute to the Government’s health promotion and *Fit Futures* agenda (<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dhssps/ifh-fitfutures.pdf> ).

In general their use for ‘mechanised’ activities such as cycling and motor sports and for field sports is inappropriate but small scale running events are acceptable at some sites.

Provision of access to statutory nature reserves is assessed with reference to the suitability of individual sites to sustain visitor pressure. Some habitats are clearly more robust than others and some species may be particularly sensitive to human or canine disturbance. In some cases part of a reserve may be developed for public access where the benefit in terms of education and awareness-raising is considered to be of sufficient value to balance the potential impact on the features of interest. Public access to the remainder of the reserve may be restricted to protect those features.

Public access can be considered within the overall framework of site management so that proposals for new or additional facilities can be presented and agreed through a management planning process. Provision of carefully managed public access could make a modest contribution to a landowner’s income through admission or parking charges or sales to visitors.

Where appropriate, site managers should seek to facilitate access for people with disabilities, complying with current best practice where reasonably practicable. It must, however, be recognised that this will not be done at the expense of nature conservation priorities. Appropriate visitor facilities and information may require planning permission and an environmental impact assessment depending on size, scale and location.

## 7.7 Interpretation, education and demonstration of best management practice

**7.7.1 Interpretation**

As with public access, many nature reserves provide excellent opportunities for the interpretation of wildlife, earth science and natural processes but can be restricted as to the physical facilities they can offer.

Experience has shown that carefully designed on-site interpretation, supported by other material where possible, can greatly improve a visitor’s enjoyment and perception of a site. Some sites lend themselves to the provision of interpretation through visitor centres and for facilities such as observation hides. Where on-site signage could detract from the “wilderness” appeal of a site, IT or off-site provision may be more appropriate.

**7.7.2 Education**

Agenda 21, to which the UK Government became a signatory at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, acknowledges that education is critical in achieving environmental awareness and *the values, skills, attitudes and behaviours* consistent with sustainable development.

NIEA uses the term ‘environmental education’ to describe learning that prepares people to make informed choices on the way they interact with their environment. Raising awareness and understanding is used as a means of encouraging and advancing environmentally sustainable practice in all aspects of people’s lives.

Nature reserves offer particular education opportunities for study that may be hard to find elsewhere; for example Belshaw’s Quarry Nature Reserve near Lisburn features an exposure of successive strata laid down over a period of 225 million years. On the other hand most reserves are not well equipped with facilities for dealing with school parties and often, because of their very nature, are either remote or potentially hazardous.

**7.7.3 Demonstration**

The staff of NIEA and Approved Bodies continuously gain practical knowledge and experience as to how species and habitats can be maintained, enhanced or restored through their management of (N)NRs and other properties. NIEA recognises that it is beneficial to have a range of management techniques to achieve similar aims and will seek to encourage innovative solutions to habitat management. However it must be noted that where (N)NRs have highly specialised flora and fauna these sites may not be the best suited to trialling techniques which might have adverse impacts.

Knowledge and expertise in nature conservation management is relevant in a much wider context as the basis for much of the advice given to other Departmental officers and land managers and contributes significantly to the development of conservation objectives and management prescriptions for ASSIs. Nature reserves also can be used to demonstrate to managers of other land important for nature conservation how that land might best be managed to maintain and enhance its value for wildlife. Options may include active management or compartments where there is a presumption for non-intervention. NIEA will welcome approaches for conservation management advice and will pass on any relevant management experience gained.

## 7.8 Stakeholder and local community engagement

Sites are never isolated from their surroundings. It is often possible to secure their safeguard only through co-operation with others. Good local relations are a way in which to improve opportunities to achieve targets set for the features.

Where appropriate, local communities and other stakeholders will be encouraged to take an active interest in the management of (N)NRs, thereby promoting a sense of value, shared ownership, an appreciation of the value of the environment and a sense of community pride in individual sites.

Public interest can have considerable implications for site management and place significant obligations on the site manager, so must be taken into account. It covers a broad spectrum, with the interests of the local individual or community at one extreme and organised national, or even international, interest potentially at the opposite extreme. NIEA recognises that other people may have different and sometimes opposing, interests in the site. It is essential that these interests are given due consideration where possible. There may be a justifiable case for compromise, providing that the prime objectives of management for nature conservation, study and research are not placed in jeopardy.

For those statutory nature reserves with public access provision, there can be mutual benefits from engaging with the local community:

* NIEA or the approved body site manager can benefit through assistance in addressing visitor-related issues including control of antisocial behaviour, littering and wildlife disturbance. The manager can explain reasons for management projects where these might otherwise provoke local public criticism. The manager can also receive useful information on past management practices, current management problems and species records.
* The community can benefit from the opportunity to provide the local perspective to management proposals for enhancing public facilities. Local groups can request guided walks and talks, and schools may be supplied with materials and guidance on sustainable use of a reserve for field studies or fact sheets allowing classroom study of a local site.

## 7.9 Strategic partnerships

NIEA recognises that it is only one of several bodies with expertise in nature reserve management and welcomes the opportunity to work in partnership with others in this field.

**7.9.1 Partnership**

The NCALO, Part V, Article 17 enables NIEA to declare, under a nature reserve agreement, land belonging to an individual or other body to be a statutory nature reserve for the purpose of securing its appropriate management as a nature reserve. NIEA currently has agreements with a number of organisations delivering management of nature reserves in partnership. These include DAERA Forest Service, NI Water, environmental NGOs, some Local Authorities and a few private land owners. Where land is of national importance for nature conservation, Article 18 of the NCALO further enables NIEA to declare the site to be a national nature reserve.

While the enabling legislation permits NIEA to fund management by approved bodies through grant aid and management agreements (see 8.9.2 below), its ability to do so is constrained by the financial allocation it receives. Statutory nature reserves managed by approved bodies are of equal status to those managed by NIEA. Their contribution to conserving Northern Ireland’s natural heritage is recognised by their declaration and is highly valued.

In some cases, other bodies can deliver specialist management skills and expertise and may have access to more resources and facilities than NIEA. The location of their existing operations may make environmental NGOs and local authorities obvious choices for managing reserves in certain areas; or they may be more acceptable than government in some communities where they are already established as a stakeholder.

NIEA will work with other (N)NR land-holding bodies and private landowners to develop the long-term working relationships needed to secure the subsequent long-term management of sites outside DAERA ownership which may be added to the existing suite of (N)NRs. NIEA will strive to achieve the best management solution for any given (N)NR and warmly welcomes the opportunity to enter into partnership arrangements with other bodies and local authorities to secure this.

**7.9.2 Management agreements and grant aid**

Grant aid has been available to eligible applicant bodies over many years for the acquisition, management, provision of facilities and interpretation of nature reserves. Increasing demand for grant aid and declining grant budgets mean that only those elements of projects supporting NIEA's highest priorities are likely to be supported in the foreseeable future. In relation to funding site management, the highest priority is currently afforded to projects which are essential to achieving the conservation objectives of protected species and sites of international and national importance.

NIEA will periodically review all nature reserve management agreements to assess their effectiveness in terms of project delivery and value for money and will, if necessary, introduce measures to improve delivery against objectives with the ultimate sanction of terminating the agreement.

## 7.10 Economic and social benefits

NIEA recognises that (N)NRs may afford a variety of public benefits to local communities and will seek to maintain these where they do not conflict with feature conservation.

**7.10.1 Tourism.**

Tourism Northern Ireland (TNI) recognises that Northern Ireland’s main attractions to tourists include its attractive landscape, its historic heritage and its unique culture. An under-marketed asset is the natural heritage - its habitats, wildlife and geology. Large numbers of tourists to and from within Northern Ireland already contribute greatly to the local economy through visits to (N)NRs, for example: the Giant’s Causeway, Kebble (the RSPB Seabird Centre at Rathlin’s West Light) and Oxford Island (the Discovery Centre).

With careful selection of sites, targeted marketing and appropriate management of visitors, the nature reserve series could make a significant further contribution the Northern Ireland tourism product.

NIEA will support the principle of natural heritage tourism to (N)NRs provided this does not adversely affect designation features, but will refer their managers to TNI for financial support in developing the tourism product at these sites. Where the body managing the site can supplement its management costs through charging for admission or for services such as education and guided walks, or can attract commercial sponsorship, they may need to follow the ASSI consent process required under Article 32 of the Environment (NI) Order 2002 (see <http://origin-www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/2002/3153/article/32> )

**7.10.2 Health and well-being**

Those aspects which attract tourists to (N)NRs will also be valued by local visitors. (N)NRs already contribute to public health and well-being. Those with path systems afford popular and stimulating walking routes where the benefits of exercise are supplemented by engagement with nature. Research has confirmed the health benefits (see <http://www.rspb.org.uk/forprofessionals/policy/health/index.aspx>) which contact with nature brings. Such social benefits should not be overlooked. A key aim in marketing (N)NRs as destinations can be to raise their profile and awareness of the benefits they can offer to society as a whole.

**7.10.3 Social justice**

In managing and marketing nature reserves managers should seek to ensure that no sectors in society are disadvantaged (as required under Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998).

# 8. Equality screening.

This Policy Position Statement has been subject to equality impact screening, in line with the statutory obligation in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The outcome of this exercise indicates that the Statement is unlikely to have significant adverse implications for equality of opportunity or for community relations to the minority groups specified.

Nothing in this document should be read as a commitment that public resources will be provided for any specific project. All proposals for expenditure by the Department are subject to economic appraisal and will also have to be considered having regard to the overall availability of resources.

# 9. Glossary

**ALA** The Amenity Lands Act (Northern Ireland) 1965

**AONB** Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

**ASSI** Area of Special Scientific Interest

**BAP** Biodiversity Action Plan

**CEC** Crown Estate Commissioners

**CIL** Commissioners for Irish Lights

**CMS** Conservation Management System ©

**CNCC** Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside (advisory body to the Northern Ireland Government on nature conservation)

**DAERA** Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

**EHS** Environment & Heritage Service

**EMFG** Environment, Marine and Fisheries Group

**ESCR** Earth Science Conservation Review

**ETMGC** East Tyrone Mallard Gun Club

**HAP** Habitat Action Plan

**JNCC** Joint Nature Conservation Committee (advisory body to the UK Government on nature conservation)

**LFWA** Lough Foyle Wildfowlers Association

**LNR** Local Nature Reserve

**MNR** Marine Nature Reserve

**MOD** Ministry of Defence

**Natura 2000** The EU name for the network of sites made up of SPAs and SACs

**NCALO** Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (as amended 1989)

**NIEA** Northern Ireland Environment Agency

**NRC** Nature Reserves Committee (Northern Ireland Statutory Advisory Committee on nature conservation, now superseded by the CNCC)

**NHSP** Natural Heritage Strategic Plan

**NIBS** Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy

**NNR** National Nature Reserve

**(N)NRs** National Nature Reserves and other Statutory Nature Reserves declared under the provisions of the NCALO

**NR** Nature Reserve

**SAC** Special Area of Conservation

**SAP** Species Action Plan

**SLNCI** Site of Local Nature Conservation Importance

**SPA** Special Protection Area

**TNI** Tourism Northern Ireland

# 10. Appendices

The text of this Statement is supplemented by the following Appendices:

* + 1. A short history of Nature Reserve declaration in Northern Ireland
    2. List of Statutory Nature Reserves in Northern Ireland
    3. Statutory Nature Reserves database for Northern Ireland
    4. Flow Chart of statutory Nature Reserves (NNR & NR) selection process
    5. Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Northern Ireland) Order 1985

(as amended 1989, 2002 and 2013) paragraphs relating to Nature Reserves

* + 1. Planning Policy on Nature Conservation

## Appendix 1

## A short history of Nature Reserve declaration in Northern Ireland

In Great Britain the concept of nature reserves originates in the first national policy for nature conservation established in 1947 by Government White Paper. The underlying philosophy was that nature conservation should be centred on the safeguarding of key areas that represented major examples of natural and semi-natural biotopes together with their characteristic plant and animal communities.

In the 1950s, the key area concept was put into practice there by the acquisition and declaration of statutory nature reserves guided eventually by both the Nature Conservation Review and the Geological Conservation Review. These identified the key sites where management primarily for nature conservation was deemed to be paramount.

In Northern Ireland, the process of nature conservation site appraisal did not start formally until 1966 with the establishment of the Nature Reserves Committee (NRC). Assisted by groups of visiting specialists, the NRC had assessed a wide range of habitats within four years and was able to propose a list to Government of 147 sites deemed worthy of statutory protection. Of these, 44 were recommended as nature reserves. In 1970 the first 12 Nature Reserves (NRs) were designated under the Amenity Lands Act (Northern Ireland) 1965. Subsequent progress was slow and it was not until 1987 that the original objective of 44 statutory nature reserves was achieved.

37 NRs were declared prior to 1985 under the Amenity Lands Act (1965). DOE then declared 12 NNRs under the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (NI) Order 1985 (NCALO) which provides for the declaration of NNRs. Two of these were upgrades from NR status and a third comprised lands within a country park. No additional NRs have been declared despite the fact that NIEA manages a number of undeclared sites as nature reserves, which meet the NR criteria.

The Amenity Lands Act was replaced in 1985 by new enabling legislation, the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (NI) Order. This Order (as amended 1989) places particular emphasis on the establishment of a network of Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs), Nature Reserves (NRs), National Nature Reserves (NNRs) and Marine Nature Reserves (MNRs). These include areas important for their geology and land forms as well as for their wildlife.

Government now initiated major habitat surveys leading to the statutory protection of important sites, either through their designation as Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs) or through their establishment and management as nature reserves. The best reserves designated under this new legislation could be termed National Nature Reserves (NNRs).

Under the NCALO, local authorities and non-government organisations can also be grant-aided to carry out conservation management on both statutory and non-statutory reserves, and can establish ‘local’ nature reserves (LNRs).

While the term Nature Reserve without the prefix ‘National’ originates from the 1965 Amenity Lands Act, its potential use is retained in the 1985 NCALO. Article 18 of the NCALO allows the Department to re-declare a Nature Reserve as a National Nature Reserve (NNR) if it is satisfied that the site is of national importance.

Sites designated as National Nature Reserves are chosen from among the best examples of our wildlife, habitats and geological features. Their designation is a public recognition by Government of their importance for biodiversity and nature conservation.

**Nature Reserves in the context of other designations**

The ASSI declaration programme is designed to find and protect the best examples of each habitat, each earth science interest and the most important sites for birds and other fauna. As of March 2016, 375 sites have been declared covering in excess of 100,000 hectares or approaching 8% of land area in Northern Ireland. An ASSI declaration recognises the importance of the natural heritage of the designated area and obliges land managers to protect this heritage. NIEA assists landowners to achieve favourable conservation status within their ASSI lands by monitoring and providing advice and incentives.

By June 2010, 105 of these ASSIs were also recognised as being of international importance by having an additional European declaration as Special Protection Area (SPA) under the Birds Directive and / or Special Area of Conservation (SAC) under the Habitats and Species Directive. These European sites comprising the Natura 2000 Network are the most important sites for nature conservation and receive priority when it comes to monitoring and management. Many (N)NRs are part of the Network.

Management for nature conservation on ASSIs tends, by necessity, to be considered by landowners as secondary to their revenue-generating, primary land uses. For a site to qualify for declaration as a Nature Reserve, the primary land use must be nature conservation. Sites that do not qualify as (N)NRs can be considered for declaration by local government as local nature reserves or identified as SLNCIs. For more information on ASSIs go to:

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/topics/land-and-landscapes/areas-special-scientific-interest>

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-environmental-statistics-report-2016>

<https://www.doeni.gov.uk/publications/?search=%22northern+ireland+environmental+statistics+report>

**Nature Reserves as Visitor Destinations**

The historical context of NR development almost came close to excluding people from nature reserves in some cases (eg the strict nature reserves of some countries in eastern Europe), whether by legislation or by unwritten ‘norms’ of what a NR should do. The need to have greater public participation evolved against this background and it was seen as increasingly difficult to justify excluding people from land their tax paid for.

Elsewhere in the UK NNRs are now expected to serve a public benefit function to qualify. However the main purpose of a nature reserve is to conserve nature and some habitats are easier than others to provide access on. There is a risk that policy-makers not familiar with the historical evolution of the idea then start to look at how much NRs can deliver for people and some habitats are then rejected on the grounds that it will be more difficult to provide access, for example at peatlands where boardwalks are required compared to grasslands, which might be of lower conservation value.

In NI, the primacy of management for nature conservation has been maintained with provision public access where this does not compromise the natural heritage features. However the use of (N)NRs for study and research has remained disappointingly limited.

**Designations to protect marine sites**

Declaration of Nature Reserves and National Nature Reserves under the NCALO Articles 15-18 applies only to ‘land’, which in practice has included the intertidal area.  There are examples of both rocky and sandy shores in the current series of statutory nature reserves, which includes foreshore at Roe Estuary, Portrush, Kebble, North Strangford Lough, The Dorn, Cloghy Rocks, Granagh Bay and Killard.

Part 3 of Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013 provides for identifying and declaring Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs).

For more information on protecting biodiversity in the Marine environment visit <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/marine-protected-areas>.

## Appendix 2

## List of Statutory Nature Reserves in Northern Ireland

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| OBJECT ID \* | DESIGNATION  # indicates part not yet declared | NAME | TYPE | COUNTY | DECLARED | AREA Ha | Arc GIS REF |
| 1 | NNR | North Strangford Lough | Coastal | Down | 08/07/1987 | 1,015 | NNR5 |
| 2 | NNR | Oxford Island Lough Neagh | Reed beds and swamp | Armagh | 15/07/1992 | 68 | NNR6 |
| 3 | NNR | Hollymount Forest | Woodland, wetland | Down | 24/03/1987 | 15 | NNR1 |
| 4 | NNR# | Giant’s Causeway | Coastal | Antrim | 24/03/1987 | 71 | NNR2 |
| 5 | NNR | Ballyquintin Point | Coastal | Down | 24/03/1987 | 16 | NNR3 |
| 6 | NNR# | Ballynahone Bog | Peatland | Londonderry | 13/09/2000 | 98 | NNR8 |
| 7 | NNR | Altikeeragh | Peatland | Londonderry | 20/03/2002 | 180 | NNR9 |
| 8 | NNR | Binevenagh | Cliffs and grassland | Londonderry | 24/03/1987 | 70 | NNR4 |
| 9 | NNR | Lough Beg | Grassland, woodland, ornithology | Londonderry | 04/08/1999 | 148 | NNR7 |
| 10 | NNR | Killard | Coastal | Down | 31/03/2010 | 90 | NNR10 |
| 11 | NNR | Ness & Ervey Wood | Woodland | Londonderry | 31/03/2010 | 42 | NNR11 |
| 12 | NNR | Portrush | Coastal | Antrim | 31/03/2010 | 0.9 | NNR12 |
| 13 | NR# | Correl Glen Forest | Woodland, heath | Fermanagh | 04/09/1970 | 34 | NR1 |
| 14 | NR | Killeter Forest | Peatland | Tyrone | 04/09/1970 | 22 | NR2 |
| 15 | NR | Marble Arch | Woodland, river | Fermanagh | 04/09/1970 | 24 | NR3 |
| 16 | NR | Rostrevor Forest | Woodland | Down | 04/09/1970 | 17 | NR5 |
| 17 | NR | Belshaw’s Quarry | Quarry | Antrim | 01/12/1972 | 1 | NR12 |
| 18 | NR# | Banagher Glen | Wooded river valley | Londonderry | 14/01/1976 | 30 | NR18 |
| 19 | NR | Meenadoan | Peatland | Tyrone | 01/08/1974 | 20 | NR14 |
| 20 | NR | Boorin | Heath, woodland | Tyrone | 01/07/1975 | 56 | NR16 |
| 21 | NR | Brackagh Bog | Wetland | Armagh | 01/06/1976 | 110 | NR19 |
| 22 | NR# | Kebble and Kinramer | Coastal, grassland | Antrim | 01/07/1976 | 123 | NR22 |
| 23 | NR# | Murrins | Heathland | Tyrone | 01/07/1977 | 54 | NR28 |
| 24 | NR | Castlecaldwell Forest | Fen, scrub | Fermanagh | 01/11/1978 | 7 | NR31 |
| 25 | NR | Glenariff Waterfalls | Wooded river valley | Antrim | 01/03/1979 | 8 | NR32 |
| 26 | NR# | Crossmurrin and Killykeeghan | Upland grassland | Fermanagh | 01/08/1979 | 96 | NR33a |
| 27 | NR | Mullenakill & Annagarriff | Peat bog,woodland | Armagh | 28/05/1980 | 99 | NR34 |
| 28 | NR | Hanging Rock & Rossaa Forest | Cliff, woodland | Fermanagh | 01/06/1980 | 15 | NR35 |
| 29 | NR | Lough Neagh Islands | Islands in Lough Neagh | Antrim Armagh Down Londonderry  Tyrone | 15/07/1983 | 17 | NR37 |
| 30 | NR | Reilly & Gole Woods | Woodland | Fermanagh | 14/11/1983 | 67 | NR38 |
| 31 | NR | Straidkilly | Woodland, grass | Antrim | 14/11/1983 | 7 | NR39 |
| 32 | NR | Bohill Forest | Woodland | Down | 04/09/1970 | 1 | NR6 |
| 33 | NR | Breen Oakwood | Woodland | Antrim | 04/09/1970 | 22 | NR7 |
| 34 | NR | Castle Archdale Forest | Islands in Lower Lough Erne | Fermanagh | 01/03/1975 | 74 | NR15 |
| 35 | NR | Lough Naman Bog | Peatland | Fermanagh | 22/11/1972 | 40 | NR11 |
| 36 | NR# | Quoile Pondage Basin | Lake, wetland | Down | 04/09/1970 | 195 | NR8 |
| 37 | NR | Randalstown Forest Lough Neagh | Woodland, lakes | Antrim | 04/09/1970 | 169 | NR9 |
| 38 | NR | Slievanorra Forest | Peatland | Antrim | 01/06/1976 | 57 | NR20 |
| 39 | NR | Swan Island | Coastal | Antrim | 03/01/1972 | 0.1 | NR10 |
| 40 | NR | Granagh Bay | Coastal | Down | 01/04/1974 | 24 | NR13 |
| 41 | NR | Dorn | Coastal | Down | 01/08/1975 | 790 | NR17 |
| 42 | NR | Farr’s Bay Lough Neagh | Fen, carr | Antrim | 01/06/1976 | 6 | NR21 |
| 43 | NR# | Cloghy Rocks | Coastal | Down | 01/07/1976 | 28 | NR23 |
| 44 | NR | Roe Estuary | Coastal | Londonderry | 01/08/1976 | 468 | NR24 |
| 45 | NR | Ballymaclary | Coastal | Londonderry | 01/12/1976 | 227 | NR25 |
| 46 | NR | Magilligan Point | Coastal | Londonderry | 01/12/1976 | 57 | NR26 |
| 47 | NR | Murlough | Coastal | Down | 01/04/1977 | 283 | NR27 |
| 48 | NR | Ross Lough | Lake, wetland | Fermanagh | 01/07/1977 | 9 | NR29 |
| 49 | NR | Rea's Wood Forest Lough Neagh | Woodland, fen | Antrim | 01/06/1980 | 26 | NR36 |

Several additional NIEA-managed sites including Brookend, Caldanagh Bog, Clara Bog, Dunloy Bog, Garry Bog, Inishfendra, Kells Point, Killywoolaghan, Killycolpy, Lusty Beg, Montiagh’s Moss, Sheeky’s Wood, Tolan’s Point, Turmennan and Tullywannia are managed as nature reserves but as yet have no (N)NR designation.

## Appendix 3

## Overview of data for Statutory Nature Reserves for Northern Ireland

**Key**

NR Statutory Nature Reserve declared under Amenity Lands Act (NI) 1965

NNR Statutory National Nature Reserve declared under NCALO 1985

Other Managed by NIEA as nature reserve but no formal NNR/NR declaration currently

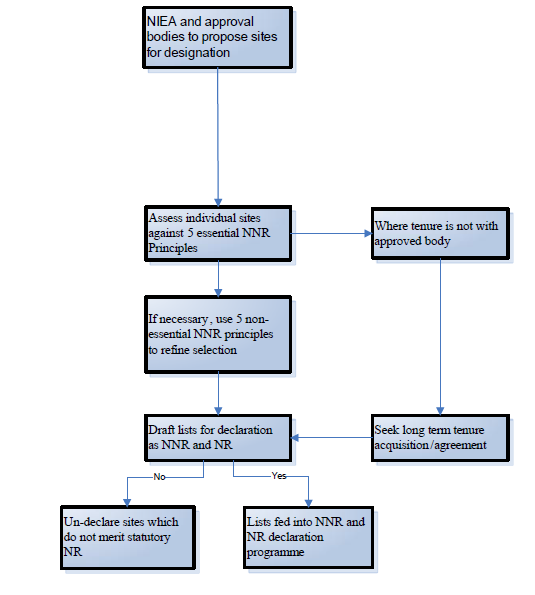
**Summary of NR/NNR designation by County**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Total for NI** | **NR** | **NNR** | **Other NIEA NRs\*** | **Total\*** |
| Numbers of sites | 37 | 12 | 15 | 64 |
| Areas in hectares | 3,283 | 1,814. | 1,473 | 6,570 |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| **County Antrim** |  |  |  |  |
| Numbers of sites | 11 | 2 | 6 | 18 |
| Areas in hectares | 435.1 | 72 | 462 | 969 |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| **County Armagh** |  |  |  |  |
| Numbers of sites | 2 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| Areas in hectares | 209 | 68 | 118 | 395 |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| **County Down** |  |  |  |  |
| Numbers of sites | 7 | 4 | 2 | 13 |
| Areas in hectares | 1,339 | 1136 | 26 | 2,501 |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| **County Fermanagh** |  |  |  |  |
| Numbers of sites | 9 | 0 | 3 | 13 |
| Areas in hectares | 366 | 0 | 183 | 551 |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| **County Londonderry** |  |  |  |  |
| Numbers of sites | 4 | 5 | 0 | 9 |
| Areas in hectares | 781 | 538. | 99 | 1,319 |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| **County Tyrone** |  |  |  |  |
| Numbers of sites | 4 | 0 | 3 | 7 |
| Areas in hectares | 151 | 0 | 585 | 736 |

\*Estimated values. Figures for area includes land acquired as extensions to existing sites NR/NNRs.

## Appendix 4

## Flow Chart of statutory Nature Reserves (NNR & NR) selection process



## Appendix 5

## Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Northern Ireland) Order 1985

(as amended 1989, 2002 and 2013) paragraphs relating to Nature Reserves

**Part I INTRODUCTORY**

***Interpretation* N.I.**

**2.** (2) In this Order —

“the Department” means the Department of the Environment;

“nature conservation” means the conservation of flora, fauna and geological and physiographical features;

“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.

“owner”, in relation to any land, means any person (other than a mortgagee not in possession) who is the holder of or who is for the time being entitled to sell or otherwise dispose of the fee simple (including a fee farm grant) of the land or any person entitled to possession of the land by virtue of any estate in the land other than a mere licence;

“voluntary body” means any body of persons, whether corporate or unincorporate carrying on or proposing to carry on an undertaking otherwise than for profit.

**Part II NATURE CONSERVATION AND ENJOYMENT OF THE COUNTRYSIDE**

***Nature conservation and enjoyment of the countryside*N.I.**

1. (1) The functions of the Department shall include formulating and implementing

policies for nature conservation and the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty and amenity of the countryside.

(2)  In exercise of its functions under paragraph (1) (and without prejudice to the generality of that paragraph), the Department may —

(a) carry out, commission, or support by financial means or otherwise, such inquiries, investigations or researches as it considers necessary or expedient;

(b) provide advice and disseminate knowledge about nature conservation and the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty and amenity of the countryside;

(c) establish, manage and maintain nature reserves in Northern Ireland;

(d) take such steps as it considers expedient to encourage the provision and improvement, for persons resorting to the countryside, of facilities for the enjoyment of the countryside and open-air recreation in the countryside.

(3) The Department —

(a) may provide, or assist in the provision of, publicity, mapping and information services relating to the countryside, to places of beauty and interest therein; and

(b) shall take such steps as appear to it expedient for securing that suitable methods of publicity are used for the prevention of damage in the countryside and for encouraging a proper standard of behaviour on the part of persons resorting to the countryside.

**PART III N.I. AMENITY LANDS**

***Acquisition and disposal of amenity lands*N.I.**

**6.** (1)  Where the Department considers that it is expedient to acquire land for the

purpose of —

(a) conserving any area of natural beauty or amenity;

(b) establishing a nature reserve;

(c) providing means of access to any area of the kind referred to in sub-paragraphs (a) and (b);

(d) providing, in or in relation to any such area or any National Park, facilities for the use of that area or Park by the public;

(e ) restoring or improving the appearance of a derelict site or of improving the amenities of the neighbourhood of a derelict site;

the Department may, in accordance with arrangements approved by the Department of Finance and Personnel, acquire such land by agreement (whether by way of purchase, lease or exchange) or otherwise.

(2) Where, for any of the purposes referred to in paragraph (1), the Department desires to acquire otherwise than by agreement any land, the Department may make an order vesting that land in the Department.

(3) Section 97(2) and (3) of, and Schedule 6 to, the [1972 c. 9 (N.I.)] Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 shall apply subject to the modifications specified in Schedule 2 for the purpose of the making of vesting orders under this Article.

(4)  Where the Department is of the opinion that any land acquired under this Article would be more expediently or efficiently managed or conserved in the public interest by any person the Department may, in accordance with arrangements approved by the Department of Finance and Personnel, convey, either for value or otherwise and upon such terms and conditions as the Department may think fit, that land to that person, and may—

(i) impose such restrictions as the Department may think necessary on the user of the land so conveyed; and

(ii) grant or reserve such rights over such land as the Department may think fit.

(5) Without prejudice to paragraph (4), the Department may, in accordance with arrangements approved by the Department of Finance and Personnel, dispose of any land acquired under this Article which the Department no longer requires for any of the purposes referred to in paragraph (1), upon such terms and conditions as the Department may think fit, and may impose restrictions and grant or reserve rights as if the land were conveyed under paragraph (4).

(6)  Nothing in section 5 of the [1933 c. 6 (N.I.)] Stormont Regulation and Government Property Act (Northern Ireland) 1933 (which relates to the taking and disposal of land for the public services) shall affect the disposal by the Department of land acquired under this Article.

***Management agreements with owners and occupiers of land* N.I.**

**9 .** (1)  The Department may for the purpose of conserving or enhancing the natural beauty or amenity of any land or promoting its enjoyment by the public, make an agreement (in this Article referred to as a “management agreement”) with any person having an estate in the land, with respect to the management of the land during a specified term or without limitation of the duration of the agreement.

(2)  Without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (1), a management agreement —

(a) may impose restrictions on that person as respects the method of cultivating the land, its use for agricultural purposes or the exercise of rights over the land and may impose obligations on that person to carry out works or agricultural or forestry operations or do other things on the land;

(b) may contain such incidental and consequential provisions (including provisions for the making of payments by the Department to that person) as appear to the Department to be necessary or expedient for the purposes of the agreement.

(3)  The provisions of a management agreement with any person having an estate in the land shall, unless the agreement otherwise provides, be binding on persons deriving title under or from that person and be enforceable by the Department against those persons accordingly.

**PART V NATURE RESERVES**

***Advice and consultations on nature reserves*N.I.**

**15.**(1)  The Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside shall advise the Department on the establishment and management of nature reserves.

(2)  Where the Department proposes to establish a nature reserve on any land which lies wholly or partly within the district of a district council, the Department shall consult that council before —

(a) acquiring the land under Article 6; or

(b) entering into any agreement or covenant under Article 8 or 17 in relation to that land.

***Declarations in relation to nature reserves*N.I.**

**16.** (1) The Department may **declare** that any land —

(a) acquired under Articles 6, 24 or 25 or under Article 41 of the Environment (Northern Ireland) Order 2002 or undersection 1 of the Amenity Lands Act (Northern Ireland) 1965; or

(b) in relation to which an agreement or covenant has been entered into under Article 8 or 17 or under section 2 or 2A of that Act;

is **established and is being managed as a nature reserve**.

(2) Where the Department has made a declaration under paragraph (1) in relation to any land and the Department is satisfied —

(a) that the land has ceased to be managed as a nature reserve; or

(b) that the agreement or covenant under Article 8 or 17 or under section 2 or 2A of the Amenity Lands Act (Northern Ireland) 1965 has ceased to be in force;

the Department shall declare that the land is no longer being managed as a nature reserve.

(3)  Any declaration under paragraph (1) or (2) shall be conclusive evidence of the matters therein declared.

(4)  The Department shall give notice of any declaration under this Article in such manner as appears to the Department best suited for informing persons concerned.

***Agreements for management of land as nature reserveN.I.***

**17.** (1)  The Department may enter into an agreement with any person having an estate in any land which in the opinion of the Department should be managed as a nature reserve, for securing that it is so managed.

(2)  An agreement under paragraph (1) may impose such restrictions as may be expedient on the exercise of rights over the land by persons who can be bound by the agreement.

(3)  An agreement under paragraph (1) —

(a) may provide for the management of the land in such manner, the carrying out thereon of such work, and the doing thereon of such other things as may be expedient for the purposes of the agreement;

(b) may provide for any of the matters mentioned in sub-paragraph (a) being carried out, or for the cost thereof being defrayed, either by the said owner or other persons, or by the Department, or partly in one way and partly in another;

(c) may contain such other provisions as to the making of payments by the Department, and, in particular, for the payment by it of compensation for the effect of the restrictions mentioned in paragraph (2), as may be specified in the agreement.

(4)  Where a person having an estate in any land, by such an agreement as is mentioned in paragraph (1) grants or agrees to grant any right as respects the land, the grant or agreement shall be binding upon any person deriving title or otherwise claiming under the grantor to the same extent as it is binding upon the grantor notwithstanding that it would not have been binding upon that person apart from this paragraph.

(5)  An agreement under paragraph (1) may be made irrevocably or subject to such provisions for revocation or variation as may be specified in the agreement.

(6)  Paragraph (3) of Article 8 shall apply in relation to an agreement under paragraph (1) as it applies in relation to an agreement under paragraph (1) of that Article.

***National Nature Reserves N.I.***

**18.** (1) Where the Department is satisfied that any land which —

(a) is being managed as a nature reserve under an agreement entered into with the Department;

(b) is held by the Department and is being managed by it as a nature reserve; or

(c) is held by an approved body and is managed by that body as a nature reserve,

is of national importance, the Department may declare that land to be a national nature reserve.

(2)  Paragraphs (2) to (4) of Article 16 shall apply in relation to a declaration under paragraph (1) as they apply to a declaration under paragraph (1) of that Article.

(3)  In this Article “approved body” means a body approved by the Department for the purposes of this Article.

***Byelaws for protection of Nature Reserves N.I.***

**19.** (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.

(4)  The Department shall not make byelaws as respects any land declared to be a national nature reserve under Article 18(1)(c) except on the application of the approved body concerned.

(5)  Byelaws under this Article shall not interfere with the exercise by any person of a right vested in him as owner, lessee or occupier of land in a nature reserve or with the exercise of any public right of way or of any statutory functions of any local or public authority in relation to any such land.

(6)  Where the exercise of any right vested in a person by reason of his being entitled to any estate in land is prevented or hindered by virtue of byelaws made under paragraph (2)(c), he shall be entitled to receive from the Department in respect thereof compensation calculated by reference to the depreciation of the value of that estate in land.

(7)  Any dispute arising on a claim for compensation under paragraph (6) shall, in the absence of agreement be referred to and determined by the Lands Tribunal.

(8) In this Article “approved body” has the meaning given in Article 18(3).

***Powers of district councils***

**22.** (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 paragraphs (2) and (3) of Article 19 shall have effect in relation to byelaws made under this paragraph as if for references 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 [1972 c. 9 (N.I.)] Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972.

**PART VIII N.I. GENERAL**

***Financial assistance* N.I.**

**29.** (1) Subject to paragraph (2), the Department, in accordance with arrangements approved by the Department of Finance and Personnel, may —

(a) make grants to any body of persons (not being a body carried on for profit) having among its objects the conservation of wildlife or of the countryside;

(b) give financial assistance by way of grant or loan, or partly in one way and partly in the other, to any person in respect of expenditure incurred by him in doing anything which, in the opinion of the Department is conducive to the attainment of any of the purposes of this Order.

(2)  On making a grant or loan under paragraph (1)(b) the Department may impose such conditions as it thinks fit including (in the case of a grant) conditions for repayment in specified circumstances.

***Enforcement of byelaws* N.I.**

**31.** (1) The Department or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State, may authorise persons appointed or employed to enforce byelaws made under Articles 19, 21 and 30 and to take all steps and do all acts and things, necessary for that purpose.

(2)  In particular, any person authorised under paragraph (1) may, after due warning, remove or exclude a person from any land to which a byelaw made under Article 19, 21 or 30 applies who commits, or whom he reasonably suspects of committing, an offence against any such byelaw.

(3)  A person who—

(a) commits an offence against any byelaw made under Article 19, 21 or 30; or

(b) obstructs any person authorised under paragraph (1);

shall be guilty of an offence under this Order, and shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 2 on the standard scale.

## Appendix 6

## Planning policy on Nature Conservation

The **Strategic Planning Policy Statement** (SPPS) sets out the regional planning policies for securing the orderly and consistent development of land in Northern Ireland under the reformed two-tier planning system It sets out the following ‘core 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*

Through effective management, nature reserves can contribute to all of these aims. There are strong similarities to the Common Core principles outlined in Chapter 6.

The SPPS states:

***Ecosystem services*** *are the processes by which the environment produces resources used by people that are often taken for granted, such as clean air, water, food and materials. Our health and well-being, and economic prosperity depend upon the services provided by ecosystems and their components which need to be healthy and resilient to change in order to function effectively. The careful management, maintenance and enhancement of ecosystem services are therefore an integral part of sustainable development.* Planners are required, *inter alia*, to consider:

* *safeguarding and facilitating quality open space, sport and outdoor recreation;*
* *providing for safe and secure age-friendly environments;*
* *facilitating the protection and provision of green and blue infrastructure.*

*Networks of green spaces, commonly referred to as green infrastructure, provide a wide range of environmental benefits (in both rural and urban areas) including flood water storage, urban cooling, improved air quality and habitats for wildlife. Additionally, they can provide opportunities for social interaction by serving as a focal point for recreation and community activities. This green infrastructure should be designed and managed as a multifunctional resource capable of delivering on a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for communities.*

*The natural and heritage assets of the countryside and coast need to be recognised for the contribution they make to enhancing human health and well-being. Conserving and, where possible, enhancing these environments as well as promoting their appropriate use, accessibility and connectivity is key to ensuring their sustainable upkeep.*

*It must also be recognised that the importance of the environment however goes far beyond the immediate benefits it can provide. Safeguarding our unique landscape (including heritage assets) and biological diversity also makes an important contribution to the protection of the wider global ecosystem. It is therefore critical that this vital asset is preserved and improved for the enjoyment and benefit of future generations.*

*The diversity of Northern Ireland’s habitats, species, landscapes and earth science features (i.e. natural heritage) is an important and highly valued asset of our society. Our natural heritage provides a wide range of opportunities for enjoyment, recreation and sustainable economic activity. The conservation, enhancement and restoration of the abundance, quality, diversity, and distinctiveness of the region’s natural heritage are also fundamental to the overall health and well-being of our society.*

*The* ***regional strategic objectives******for natural heritage*** *are to:*

* *protect, conserve, enhance and restore the abundance, quality, diversity and distinctiveness of the region’s natural heritage;*
* *further sustainable development by ensuring that natural heritage and associated diversity is conserved and enhanced as an integral part of social, economic and environmental development;*
* *assist in meeting international (including European), national and local responsibilities and obligations in the protection and enhancement of the natural heritage;*
* *contribute to rural renewal and urban regeneration by ensuring developments take account of the role and value of natural heritage in supporting economic diversification and contributing to a high quality environment; and*
* *take actions to reduce our carbon footprint and facilitate adaptation to climate change.*

The SPPS makes specific reference to sites and species of international importance, to Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs), of which many statutory nature reserves form a part, and commits to their protection. Specifically:

*Planning permission will only be granted for a development proposal that is not likely to have an adverse effect on the integrity, including the value of the site to the habitat network, or special interest of:*

* ***An Area of Special Scientific Interest*** *- sites of special interest by reason of their flora, fauna, geological and/or physiographical features are designated under Part IV of the Environment (Northern Ireland) Order 2002. There is a legal duty to take reasonable steps to further the conservation and enhancement of the features by which the ASSI is of special scientific interest;*
* ***A Nature Reserve or National Nature Reserve*** *– nature reserves can be of national (and sometimes international) importance. They are usually managed by the Department or by agreement with another Department, a council or a voluntary conservation body*

**Planning Policy Statement 2: Natural Heritage (July 2013), sets out planning policy for the protection and conservation of our natural heritage. In relation to (N)NRs its states that** *Planning permission will only be granted for a development proposal that is not likely to have an adverse effect on the integrity, including the value of the site to the habitat network, or special interest. A development proposal which could adversely affect a site of national importance may only be permitted where the benefits of the proposed development clearly outweigh the value of the site. In such cases, appropriate mitigation and/or compensatory measures will be required.*

Designation of sites as Local Nature Reserves (LNR) also provides protection. A guide to the selection and declaration of LNRs is available on the Biodiversity NI website at [www.biodiversityni.com/media/LNR%guide%20A5%20Final%202011.pdf](http://www.biodiversityni.com/media/LNR%25guide%20A5%20Final%202011.pdf). Whereas for a site declared as ASSI, statutory Nature Reserve or National Nature Reserve, the protection is such that any proposal which is likely to have an adverse impact is not granted, with a LNR an application will only be refused if it is likely to have a significant impact. (As of February 2016, there were 31 LNRs with a total area of 950ha.)

1. The NCALO requires that the advice of the Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside (CNCC) is sought on (N)NR declaration proposals and that local authorities are consulted. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. **Everyone’s Involved - Sustainable Development Strategy (OFMDFM 2010)** [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/doe/natural-policy-biodiversity-strategy-to-2020-2015.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <http://www.cbd.int/doc/legal/cbd-en.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/doe/protected-guidance-ASSI-scientific-survey-selection-criteria-2009.pdf> Full text available from NIEA. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. 6 NCALO Articles 6 (2) and (3) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/doe/natural-policy-biodiversity-strategy-to-2020-2015.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)