

THE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR NORTHERN IRELAND 2025

First Five Year Review

APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT REPORT

May 2007

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 An Appropriate Assessment of the Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2025 ('the Strategy') (RDS) has been carried out¹. This report is a record of the Appropriate Assessment process and the Department's findings. The Report should be read together with the document detailing the first 5-year review adjustments ("Adjustments to the Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2025 – first 5-year Review), and the Strategy document published in September 2001. Both documents are available from the Department's website www.drdni.gov.uk/shapingourfuture.
- 1.2 The requirement to carry out an Appropriate Assessment is set out under Articles 6 (3) and (4), of the European Communities Council Directive 92/43/EEC ("The Habitats Directive"), and Regulation 43 of the Conservation (Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995². The purpose of an Appropriate Assessment is to assess the impacts of a land-use plan against the conservation objectives of a European site and to ascertain whether the plan is likely to adversely affect site integrity. Where significant negative effects are identified, alternative options should be examined to avoid any potentially damaging effects.
- 1.3 Within the context of the Habitats Regulations, European sites consist of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), designated under the Habitats Directive and Special Protection Areas (SPAs), designated under the related EC Birds Directive. Together SACs and SPAs are referred to as Natura 2000 sites.
- 1.4 The Appropriate Assessment methodology followed is set out in detail in Section 3 of this report. The approach taken is relatively broad in its consideration. This reflects the overarching strategic context of the

¹ This work has been undertaken with the first five year review of the Strategy.

² The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 transpose European Communities Council Directive 92/43/EEC into domestic law.

Strategy. The RDS does not include site specific policies or proposals. Many Spatial Planning Guidelines (SPGs) are not sufficiently detailed and/or spatially specific in relation to Natura 2000 sites. However, it is recognised that there are elements of the Strategy which are 'area specific'. For the purpose of the Appropriate Assessment, applying a precautionary approach, the Strategy (with adjustments) is assessed in combination with other regional and sub-regional plans and projects.

- 1.5 Natura 2000 sites are 'grouped' to aid the Department to undertake an initial screening exercise (Page 14). This assists the Department make judgements on the likely effects of SPGs. Those SPGs likely to have a generally positive effect, or where no significant impacts are considered likely, are screened out from further assessment. A more detailed assessment is carried out where significant effects on the relevant groups are considered to be probable, or where there is sufficient uncertainty over likely effects.

2 THE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR NORTHERN IRELAND 2025

Background and Context

- 2.1 The RDS was prepared under the Strategic Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1999. Under this Order, the Department for Regional Development (DRD) is responsible for formulating, “in consultation with other Northern Ireland departments”, a regional development strategy for Northern Ireland.
- 2.2 The RDS sits at the top of the overarching hierarchy of planning policy documents in Northern Ireland. The Strategy cannot be implemented in isolation from other regional and sub-regional plans and strategies. The Strategic Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 places on other Government Departments a responsibility, in exercising any functions in relation to development, to have regard to the Strategy.
- 2.3 Not solely limited to land use, the RDS addresses a range of economic, social, environmental and community issues, and reflects National and European thinking on the use of spatial frameworks. At the heart of the Strategy is the principle of ensuring a better quality of life for everyone, now, and for generations to come, by seeking to meet the four objectives of sustainable development (RDS, page 22).
- 2.4 The RDS is organised under a number of subject areas and comprises thirteen sections. There are four ‘Guiding Principles’ and the Strategy sets out forces that are likely to drive change. One of the key Guiding Principles of the RDS is ‘An integrated approach to future development of the Region based on, (inter alia),...protection and enhancement of the environment through an approach to development and policy
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formulation which has the condition of the environment as a central deciding factor’.

2.5 The Strategy also includes a ‘Spatial Development Strategy’ (SDS) and SPGs (with associated supporting actions) that provide long-term policy direction for the public and private sectors and the whole community. The aim of the SDS is to provide a strategic focus that will guide future development to promote a balanced and equitable pattern of sustainable development throughout the Region. It is a framework based on urban hubs and clusters, key and link transport corridors and the main Regional Gateways of ports and airports.

2.6 Subject areas include:

- Strengthening Regional Cohesion in a Global Context;
- The Belfast Metropolitan Area;
- Londonderry – Regional City for the North West;
- Rural Northern Ireland;
- Meeting Housing Need;
- Supporting Economic Development;
- Developing a Regional Transportation System; and
- Caring for the Environment.

2.7 The RDS provides the spatial planning context for:

- Strengthening the competitiveness of the regional economy and tackling social and economic disadvantage;
- Protecting and enhancing the physical, natural and man made assets of the Region;
- Housing, transport, air and water quality, energy and waste strategies, and for infrastructure providers and public service promoters; and

- Development plans and for guiding public and private investment decisions relating to land use.

Environmental safeguards

2.8 The RDS sets out the spatial framework for the environment at page 176 (Diagram 13). This illustrates the spatial distribution of Areas of Special Scientific Interest, SACs, SPAs, Nature Reserves and World Heritage Sites. Detailed maps are available from Environment and Heritage Service (DOE).

2.9 Encouraging sustainable patterns of development is a key spatial development theme in the Strategy. The RDS states that:

“The SDS places a strong emphasis on the sensible use of resources and care for the whole environment. The impact of climate change, the consumption of good agricultural land by urban development and other aspects of development on air, water and land, underscores the need to take a sustainable approach to the future development of Northern Ireland. In pursuit of this aim, the Strategy identifies not only the strategic natural resources, but also emphasises the need to value and exercise good stewardship of the whole environment, including the coast and the cultural heritage. In doing so it also recognises that Northern Ireland contains high quality natural assets, some of which rank on a European scale as deserving particular protection” (RDS, Page 51-52).

2.10 Chapter 12 of the RDS ‘Caring for the Environment’ includes SPGs and supporting actions to protect and enhance the natural and built environments.

Implementation and Monitoring

2.11 Implementation of the RDS depends significantly on the work of other Government Departments. The RDS states that implementation is a very complex process involving a wide variety of public and private organisations, businesses, voluntary and community organisations and

individuals. Many of the policies can only be implemented through individual Departments and their strategies.

“To achieve the desired outcomes will require department, agencies, local authorities, business, the voluntary and community sectors, and individuals to work together within a broad development agenda to benefit the region as a whole” (RDS, p202).

- 2.12 Monitoring and evaluating progress is an important element of the Strategy. Progress on implementing the RDS is being monitored through the collection and analysis of a range of information from Government Departments using the 12 Critical Threshold Indicators which were agreed by the Interdepartmental Steering Group³.
- 2.13 A variety of other data sets are also being collected through the RDS monitoring process to identify, track and measure economic, social and environmental trends. This material is published in an Annual Monitoring Report. In addition to this, the Department also publishes a biennial report on progress on the implementation of the RDS. To date the Department has published three Implementation Reports and five Monitoring Reports. These documents can be viewed or downloaded from the Department’s website www.drdni.gov.uk/shapingourfuture

Relationship with planning process

- 2.14 The planning process has an important contribution to make in delivering the strategic objectives of the RDS. Planning Policy Statements (PPSs), produced by both DRD and Department of the Environment (DOE), translate the strategic policy of the RDS into more detailed policy guidance. Development Plans translate strategic guidance into local policies and proposals. Transport studies, which will be prepared as part of the development plan process, provide the

³ RDS 2025 – 5 Year Review, Consultation Paper – Appendix E lists the Critical Threshold Indicators.

focus to secure an integrated approach to land use and transportation planning. The RDS is a material consideration when determining individual planning applications. In preparing planning policies and development plans, the DOE is required in legislation to do so in a way that is 'in general conformity with' the Strategy as set out in Planning (Amendment) (NI) Order 2003, Article 27.

- 2.15 Operational planning policy on designated sites is presently set out in Planning Policy Statement 2 (PPS 2) 'Planning and Nature Conservation' (DOE, June 1997). PPS 2 describes the statutory framework that helps to protect designated sites, including Natura 2000 sites and advises on the treatment of nature conservation issues in development plans. In addition, it outlines the criteria which the Planning Service will employ when processing planning applications which might affect nature conservation interests and to which developers should have regard when preparing proposals. Accordingly, PPS 2 is an important safeguard for protecting the integrity of Natura 2000 sites at the sub-regional and local level.

The First 5-Year Review of the Strategy

- 2.16 A commitment is given in the RDS that a 'focused assessment' would be carried out after five years to identify any aspects where 'in-course adjustments' may be required (RDS, Page 205).
- 2.17 A consultation paper was published for a four month period on 31st May 2006. The consultation paper provides comment on progress made on each of the SPGs since the Strategy was published, and indicates the need for adjustments. It also states that any resulting alteration to the RDS would be subject to an Appropriate Assessment.
- 2.18 In conducting the Appropriate Assessment of the RDS, the Department has considered both the potential for likely adverse effects arising from

proposed adjustments to the Strategy, and those parts of the RDS which are unchanged.

3 THE APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

3.1 The legislation⁴ does not specify how an Appropriate Assessment should be undertaken. Therefore, in forming a view on what methodology to employ, the Department has had regard to existing methodological guidance and recognised examples of best practice. Relevant methodological guidance includes:

- The Habitats Regulations ‘A Guide For Competent Authorities’, Environment and Heritage Service (NI) (September 2002);
- Planning for the protection of European sites: Appropriate Assessment – Guidance for Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Frameworks, (DCLG, August 2006);
- Managing Natura 2000 Sites: The provisions of Article 6 of the ‘Habitats’ Directive 92/43/EEC (European Commission, 2000);
- The European Commission document - Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodological Guidance on the Provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (European Commission, 2002); and
- Appropriate Assessment of Plans (Scott Wilson, Levett-Therivel Sustainability Consultants, Treweek Environmental Consultants and Land Use Consultants, September 2006).

3.2 The Department is required to consult with the Department of the Environment and have regard to any representations made by it. The approach to the Appropriate Assessment of the RDS has included close liaison with the Department of the Environment’s Environment and Heritage Service and involved early discussions on the scope and level of detail proportionate to assessment of a regional strategy. Formal comments were invited on an earlier draft Appropriate

⁴ Statutory Rule 1995 No.380 – The Conservation (Natural Habitats) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995.

Assessment Report and these have been taken account of in preparing this Report.

3.3 The steps followed are summarised in Table 1 and set out in more detail in the succeeding paragraphs.

Table 1 Summary of RDS Appropriate Assessment Methodology

SCREENING / SCOPING		
Stage 1	Action	Outcome
Step 1a Information Gathering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe RDS policies and proposals Consider the relationship of the RDS with other plans and projects Analyse Natura 2000 site data provided by DOE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informs preliminary screening
Step 1b Group Natura 2000 Sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group Natura 2000 site's to structure the preliminary screening assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8 Groups from 53 SACs 5 Groups from 16 SPAs.
Step 1c: Preliminary Screening – Test of Likely Significance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Record potential effects on Natura 2000 site groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where effects are unlikely or have no significance, exclude relevant SPGs from more detailed screening assessment. Where effects are considered likely or there is uncertainty to prove otherwise, proceed to Stage 2.
APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT		
Stage 2		
Step 2a: Detailed Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess and record the likely significance of effects in more detail applying a precautionary approach Where there are likely adverse impacts consider whether mitigation measures currently contained in the RDS are sufficient and/or whether adjustments are required to protect Natura 2000 sites from likely adverse effects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree adjustments required to protect site integrity in light of likely effects.
Step 2b Prepare draft AA report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult DOE Environment and Heritage Service on draft Appropriate Assessment Report setting out methodology, findings and conclusions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amend report having regard to EHS comments
Step 2c	Publish Appropriate Assessment with reformulated Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirm findings of no likely significant effects

Stage 1 - Screening / Scoping

Step 1a: Information Gathering

3.4 The first step in the process incorporates an initial information gathering exercise using currently published material on Natura 2000 sites.

➤ Description of the plan – the RDS

3.5 Information on the RDS is set out in more detail in section two of this report. The various component features of the RDS include:

- ✓ The purpose and status of the Strategy;
- ✓ The vision and core guiding Principles;
- ✓ The Spatial Development Strategy and Themes;
- ✓ Strategic objectives for the Belfast Metropolitan Area, Londonderry and the North West and Rural Northern Ireland;
- ✓ All Strategic Planning Guidelines and associated Supporting Actions;
- ✓ Spatial specificity (ie whether the SPG / Supporting Actions are overarching, or whether its spatial relationship is 'area' or 'site' specific);
- ✓ Delivery mechanisms for implementation including the relationship with the planning process;
- ✓ Monitoring, including the outcomes of monitoring reports since the RDS was formulated; and
- ✓ Proposed adjustments emerging from the first 5-year review.

➤ **Other plans and projects**

- 3.6 Regional or geographically extensive spatial plans such as the RDS are not often applied directly but form the basis for more detailed plans or serve as a framework for development plans or consents. This is the case with the RDS.
- 3.7 There is clearly a large volume of material at the regional and sub regional level which contributes to the delivery of the strategic objectives of the RDS. This includes implementation of SPGs and the associated supporting actions. The RDS provides the context within which major investment decisions will be taken by individuals as well as public and private sector bodies. The Strategy is intended to influence other plans, strategies and projects. All Government Departments must have regard to the RDS in exercising any development functions (Strategic Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1999). DOE must prepare development plans in a way which ensures that these are ‘in general conformity with’ the RDS (Planning (Amendment) Northern Ireland Order 2003).

Characteristics of Natura 2000 sites in Northern Ireland

- 3.8 Data on Natura 2000 sites is provided by DOE Environment and Heritage Service (Appendix 1). Within Northern Ireland there are presently fifty-three confirmed or ‘candidate’ SACs⁵ and sixteen SPAs. Data provided by EHS generally included the following records:
- ✓ site name;
 - ✓ site code;
 - ✓ grid reference and area;
 - ✓ status;
 - ✓ qualifying features;
 - ✓ conservation objectives;

⁵ There are a number of SACs and cSACs in Northern Ireland which adjoin SACs and cSACs in the Republic of Ireland. These are set out for information at Annex 1 of this report.

- ✓ a site map; and
- ✓ a schedule of operations and activities likely to damage the flora, fauna, geological and physiographical features of the area.

Step 1b Group Natura 2000 Sites

3.9 For the purpose of an Appropriate Assessment of the RDS it is possible to categorise Natura 2000 sites into a number of groups (Appendix 2). This is to aid the screening of strategic policy. With the agreement of DOE Environment and Heritage Service sites were grouped on the basis of feature interests and site conservation objectives. The agreed groupings are as follows:

- 8 'Groups' from 53 'Special Areas of Conservation' (SACs)
 - GROUP 1 – Wetlands (Fens and Turloughs, etc)
 - GROUP 2 – Active Raised Bogs
 - GROUP 3 - Woodlands
 - GROUP 4 – Coastal and Marine
 - GROUP 5 – Rivers and Lakes
 - GROUP 6 – Blanket Bogs
 - GROUP 7 – Heathland
 - GROUP 8 - Grassland
- 5 Groups form 16 'Special Protection Areas' (SPAs)
 - Group 1 – Terrestrial with breeding birds
 - Group 2 – Marine sites with breeding seabirds
 - Group 3 – Marine sites with wintering/passage migrant birds
 - Group 4 – Freshwater sites with wintering birds
 - Group 5 – Freshwater sites with breeding birds

Step 1c – Preliminary Screening - Test of Likely Significance

3.10 A preliminary screening exercise involved making a broad assessment for likely effects on Natura 2000 groups arising from each SPG in the Strategy. This has taken account of proposed adjustments to the Strategy emerging from the first five-year review of the RDS. A screening matrix is presented at Appendix 4 to illustrate the findings of

this initial screening exercise. From this work it is possible for each Natura 2000 Group to identify:

- SPGs likely to have a generally positive effect;
- SPGs likely to have a generally adverse effect;
- SPGs where generally no 'significant' impact is likely; and
- SPGs where generally likely effects are uncertain.

Stage 2 – Appropriate Assessment

Step 2a Detailed Screening – Appropriate Assessment

3.11 This stage in the Appropriate Assessment process considers SPGs where sufficient 'uncertainty' exists and where the potential for adverse effects are considered to be likely. At this stage in the assessment the opportunity is taken to consider whether the RDS has adequate environmental safeguards to counter identified likely adverse effects, and/or whether further mitigation, clarification or removal of SPGs or supporting actions is necessary.

3.12 The outcome of this work is set out in detail in Appendix 5.

Step 2b Prepare Draft Appropriate Assessment Report

3.13 The Department consulted with the Department of the Environment, Environment and Heritage Service on a draft Appropriate Assessment Report setting out the approach taken, its findings and the Department's conclusions. DRD had regard to comments it received in preparing this final Report.

Step 2c Publish Appropriate Assessment Report

- 3.14 A final Appropriate Assessment is published with the reformulated RDS.

4 SCREENING FINDINGS –

Preliminary Screening – Test of Likely Significance

4.1 From the initial screening exercise it is possible for each Natura 2000 Group to make judgements on:

- SPGs likely to have a generally positive effect;
- SPGs likely to have a generally adverse effect;
- SPGs where generally no significant impact is likely;
- SPGs where generally effects are uncertain.

4.2 The outcome of this work is set out at Appendix 3.

Detailed Screening - Appropriate Assessment

4.5 This stage focused on SPGs likely to have a generally adverse effect and/or where effects are uncertain. The Appropriate Assessment determined that there are a number of elements within the Strategy that without adequate safeguards or mitigation measures adverse impacts would be likely. The Appropriate Assessment identified a number of broad areas of concern regarding implementation of the Strategy and the relationship with the Natura 200 network. Concerns included:

- The likely adverse impact of any future physical expansion and/or intensification of air, water and road based connections to Europe on loughs and waterways, dune ecosystems, and other habitats at Lough Foyle, Belfast Lough and Carlingford Lough in particular.
- The potential adverse impact of any future recreation, tourism and rural diversification development strategies, plans and projects particularly if this results in development which will lead to a rise in

visitor numbers, increased footfall, waste and pollution, use and development on or near sensitive designations/habitats in rural areas.

- Any future development, intensification and/or upgrading of the transport system or networks in Northern Ireland could lead to direct, indirect and cumulative effects if this results in increased waste and pollution, reduction in the extent of designations, other on and off- site disturbance etc.
- The impact of developing renewable energy sources, and facilitating business and rural enterprise particularly if this results in changes to land management practices and/or on site and off site disturbance.
- Meeting necessary housing need where this results in increased population, infrastructure provision, increased commercial and leisure activity, waste and light pollution disturbance on or near vulnerable sites.

4.6 In this assessment the Department has had regard to the existence of a range of environmental safeguards currently set out in the Strategy. However, the Appropriate Assessment has found that the mitigation measures included within the extant RDS are presently inadequate. ie reformulating the RDS without additional mitigation measures leaves the Northern Ireland Natura 2000 network potentially vulnerable to adverse effects. Accordingly, the Department accepted the need to modify the Strategy in order to ensure that the potential for likely adverse effects on Natura 2000 sites is avoided and agreed a number of modifications. These are set out in Section 5 of this Report. Assuming that these modifications, which emerged as part of the screening process, are incorporated into the reformulated Strategy a judgement is made as to whether any potential for adverse effects remains.

5 MODIFICATIONS TO THE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- 5.1 This part of the report describes the modifications that were considered to be required as part of the screening process if the potential for likely adverse effects were to be avoided (Table 2). These have been incorporated into the Strategy. Modifications include the need to refer specifically to Natura 2000 sites within strategic objectives, SPGs and supporting text, and the importance of cross-referencing. SPG ENV 1.1 and SPG ENV 1.2 have been particularly strengthened.

Table 2 – Modifications arising from the Appropriate Assessment screening process

RDS Reference	Adjustments
SRC 2.4 bullet 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take joint action in the environmental management of major river basins and water catchment areas such as the Foyle River Basin, the Erne/Shannon waterway system, the Bann/Blackwater system and in Carlingford Lough.
Change to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take joint action in the environmental management of the coast, major river basins, and water catchment areas such as the Foyle River Basin, the Erne/Shannon waterway system, the Bann/Blackwater system and in Carlingford Lough.
SRC 2.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop joint programmes of co-operation to share best practice in relation to the sustainable management of landscapes and ecosystems
Change to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop joint programmes of co-operation to share best practice in relation to the sustainable management of landscapes and ecosystems including Natura 2000 sites.
Strategic Objectives for the Belfast Metropolitan Area - Add new strategic objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To value and conserve the coast, and the special character, beauty and interest of designated features and landscapes in the Belfast Metropolitan Area and its Hinterland (C12: SPG ENV1)
Strategic Objective for Londonderry and the North West	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To value and conserve the coast, and the special character, beauty and interest of designated features and landscapes in Londonderry and the North West (C12: SPG-ENV1)
Strategic rural development objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing and enhancing the natural and built heritage

	in rural areas (C8: SPG-RNI 5 and C12).
Change to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managing and enhancing the natural and built heritage in rural areas, including Natura 2000 sites and other areas within Rural Northern Ireland designated for their scientific interest (C8: SPG-RNI 5 and C12: SPG ENV 8)
SPG-HOU 2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote more sustainable patterns of urban and rural development by defining housing allocations and policies in development plans based on the strategic planning guidance in Chapters 5-8 and the following general principles, and take account of the Housing Growth Indicators in SPG-HOU 3 which derive from these principles:
Change to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote more sustainable patterns of urban and rural development by defining housing allocations and policies in development plans based on the strategic planning guidance in Chapters 5-8, and Chapter 12 and the following general principles, and take account of the Housing Growth Indicators in SPG-HOU 3 which derive from these principles:
SPG-HOU 2.1 Bullet Point 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoid areas of significant environmental quality for extensions to towns and villages; and
Change to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoid areas of significant environmental quality for extensions to towns and villages, and development likely to have a significant adverse effect on international sites. (C12: SPG ENV-1)
SPG-HOU 3 HGI 3: District Population Balance (2nd para 1st sentence)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The allocation of housing growth to specific locations in a district is a matter for decision through the development plan process taking account of views

	expressed during public consultation and, specially, the strategic planning guidance in Chapters 5-9.
Change to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The allocation of housing growth to specific locations in a district is a matter for decision through the development plan process taking account of views expressed during public consultation and, specially, the strategic planning guidance in Chapters 5-9 and 12.
SPG-HOU 3 HGI 6: Major housing development proposals relating to the expansion of a village or small rural settlement, or the creation of a new settlement (Criteria for an expanded or new settlement proposal) Change to: between 2nd and 3rd bullet point insert new criterion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any housing development likely to have a significant adverse impact on international sites will be subject to assessment in accordance with the Habitats Directive.
SPG ENV 1.1	ENV 1.1 Sustain and enhance biodiversity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conserve biodiversity (the rich variety of wildlife habitats, wild plants and animals, domesticated species, cultivars and breeds) in line with the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy; Prepare and involve the community at all levels in action to promote the conservation of habitats and species of special importance and the recovery of habitats and species which are in serious decline; Protect the Region's rich resource of lakes and rivers as distinctive and attractive landscape features and as

	<p>important natural habitats and wildlife corridors, including the identification of zones on lake edges and river corridors where development should be strictly curtailed;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promote wise management of the Region's land, woodland, water and wetland resources, including the distinctive natural heritage found in Northern Ireland, such as the lakes (more than 1,600), the variety of wetlands, woodlands, and the unimproved grassland in accordance with the need to conserve biodiversity;• Place a special emphasis on the conservation of the natural heritage of peat bogs in Northern Ireland which represent a significant ecological asset at the European Union level, including co-operating with the Republic of Ireland where peat bogs straddle the border to secure an integrated approach to conservation; and• Conserve and enhance the settings of cities, towns and villages, including the landscape wedges linking town and countryside, and protect the best and most versatile agricultural land as an important and finite regional resource as far as practicable.
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<p>Change to</p>	<p>ENV 1.1 Sustain and enhance biodiversity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve biodiversity (the rich variety of wildlife habitats, wild plants and animals, domesticated species, cultivars, breeds and their ecosystems) in line with the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy 2002; • Prepare and involve the community at all levels in action to promote the recovery to favourable conservation status of priority habitats and priority species which require intervention; • Promote wise management of the Region's diversity of land, unimproved grassland, woodland, water and wetland resources and recognise their contribution to the identify of local areas in accordance with the need to conserve biodiversity; • Place a special emphasis on the conservation of the natural heritage of peat bogs in Northern Ireland which represent a significant ecological asset at the European Union level, including co-operating with the Republic of Ireland where peat bogs straddle the border to secure an integrated approach to conservation; and • Conserve and enhance the settings of cities, towns
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	<p>and villages, including the landscape wedges linking town and countryside, and protect the best and most versatile agricultural land as an important and finite regional resource as far as practicable.</p>
<p>SPG ENV 1.2</p>	<p>ENV 1.2 Protect and manage areas designated for their scientific interest:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pursue the scientific survey of the natural habitats, wild species and earth science features of the Region; • Protect sites of significant wildlife and earth science importance through designation as Areas of Special Scientific Interest, with some managed as National Nature Reserves. Sites which are internationally important will also be designated as Special Protection Areas (birds) and Special Areas of Conservation (habitats and other species) within the European Union Natura 2000 Network or Ramsar Sites (wetlands) (see also cross-border designations in SPG-SRC 2 < and Appendix 13 >); • Monitor and manage designated sites to ensure the conservation of their scientific interest; and • Identify Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance and designate these in development plans, seeking to manage suitable sites, particularly in urban and urban fringe situations, as Local Nature Reserves, where

	<p>habitat creation and conservation is combined with public access and environmental education.</p>
<p>Change to</p>	<p>ENV 1.2 Protect and manage Natura 2000 sites, and all other areas designated for their scientific interest:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to establish a coherent European ecological network of Special Areas of Conservation (habitats and other species) and Special Protection Areas (birds) to be known as Natura 2000 sites to ensure biodiversity through the conservation of natural habitats and of wild flora and fauna. • Protect and manage special protection areas (SPAs) and special areas of conservation (SACs) within the European Union Natura 2000 Network in accordance with obligations under the Northern Ireland Habitats Regulations, and wetland sites listed under the Ramsar Convention (see also cross-border designations in SPG-SRC 2 < and Appendix 13 >. • Improve the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 Network, and encourage the management of features of the landscape which are of major importance for wild flora and fauna; • Continue with the scientific survey of the Natural

	<p>Habitats, wild species and earth science features of the Region;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Protect sites nationally significant for their wildlife and earth science importance through designation as Areas of Special Scientific Interest or Marine Conservation Zones with some managed as National Nature Reserves;• Monitor and manage designated sites to maintain or restore, at favourable conservation status, the natural habitats and species of wild flora and fauna;• Identify Sites of Nature Conservation Importance and designate these in development plans, seeking to manage suitable sites, particularly in urban and urban fringe situations, as Local Nature Reserves, where habitat creation and conservation is combined with public access and environmental education.
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6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 An Appropriate Assessment of the Regional Development Strategy has been carried out in accordance with the Habitats Regulations. This work has reflected the regional and strategic nature of the Strategy. It was found that that the mitigation measures included within the extant RDS are inadequate. Accordingly, the Department accepted the need to modify the Strategy in order to ensure that the potential for likely adverse effects on Natura 2000 sites is avoided (Section 5).
- 6.3 Having incorporated additional mitigation measures contained in this report it is considered the reformulated Regional Development Strategy will not have a significant adverse effect on any of the Natura 2000 sites⁶.

⁶ Any subsequent alterations to the Strategy arising from future reviews will be required to meet the provisions of the Habitats Regulations.

Annex A

NATURA 2000 SITES IN NORTHERN IRELAND

1. Special Protection Areas (SPAs): Northern Ireland (31 March 2006)

Site name	Local Authority	Site code	Area (ha)	Latitude	Longitude	Status
Antrim Hills	Antrim	UK9020301	27093.12	55 03 45 N	06 11 54 W	Classified
Belfast Lough	Antrim	UK9020101	432.14	54 38 00 N	05 54 00 W	Classified
Belfast Lough Open Water	Antrim	UK9020290	5592.99	54 41 00 N	05 49 00 W	Potential
Carlingford Lough	Down	UK9020161	830.51	54 03 00 N	06 07 00 W	Classified
Copeland Islands	Down	UK9020291	201.52	54 41 17 N	05 31 03 W	Potential
Killough Bay	Down	UK9020221	104.23	54 15 21 N	05 37 50 W	Classified
Larne Lough	Antrim	UK9020042	395.94	54 48 54 N	05 44 38 W	Classified
Lough Foyle	Derry	UK9020031	2204.36	55 05 24 N	07 01 37 W	Classified
Lough Neagh and Lough Beg	Tyrone, Antrim, Armagh	UK9020091	40835.53	54 34 11 N	06 24 34 W	Classified
Outer Ards	Down	UK9020271	1410.41	54 32 47 N	05 29 02 W	Classified
Pettigoe Plateau	Fermanagh	UK9020051	1264.32	54 32 00 N	07 59 04 W	Classified
Rathlin Island	Antrim	UK9020011	3344.62	55 17 30 N	06 13 30 W	Classified
Sheep Island	Antrim	UK9020021	3.5	55 14 56 N	06 21 00 W	Classified
Slieve Beagh – Mullaghfad – Lisnaskea	Fermanagh / Armagh	UK9020302	8936.11	54 20 53 N	07 11 38 W	Classified
Strangford Lough	Down	UK9020111	15580.79	54 26 40 N	05 35 40 W	Classified
Upper Lough Erne	Fermanagh	UK9020071	5771.54	54 12 00 N	07 29 40 W	Classified

2. Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), and Candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSACs) : Northern Ireland (Nov 2005)

EU Code	Name	Local Authority	Grid Ref	Area (ha)	Status
UK0030318	Aughnadarragh Lough	Down	J442593	12.8	SAC
UK0030319	Ballykilbeg	Down	J447406	37.59	SAC
UK0016599	Ballynahone Bog	Londonderry	H860981	243.24	SAC
UK0030083	Banagher Glen	Londonderry	C672045	87.77	SAC
UK0030084	Bann Estuary	Londonderry	C797363	347.94	SAC
UK0030089	Binevenagh	Londonderry	C686309	90.79	SAC
UK0016609	Black Bog	Tyrone	H635810	183.42	SAC
UK0030097	Breen Wood	Antrim	D123336	36.01	SAC
UK0030110	Carn – Glenshane Pass	Londonderry	C788075	1938.78	SAC
UK0030116	Cladagh (Swanlinbar) River	Fermanagh	H241301	28.3	SAC
UK0030321	Cranny Bogs	Tyrone	H424640	78.9	SAC
UK0016603	Cuilcagh Mountain	Fermanagh	H127305	2744.45	SAC
UK0030322	Curran Bog	Londonderry	H872954	183.31	SAC
UK0030323	Dead Island Bog	Londonderry	C931053	54.56	SAC
UK0030324	Deroran Bog	Tyrone	H524713	75.46	SAC
UK0016620	Derryleckagh	Down	J119254	48.69	SAC
UK0016615	Eastern Mournes	Down	J328270	7507.03	SAC
UK0016611	Fairy Water Bogs	Tyrone	H340772	223.7	SAC
UK0030068	Fardrum and Roosky Turloughs	Fermanagh	H180502	43.1	SAC
UK0016606	Garron Plateau	Antrim	D240190	4650.07	SAC
UK0016610	Garry Bog	Antrim	C940305	154.76	SAC
UK0030169	Hollymount	Down	J464438	49.95	SAC
UK0030045	Largalunny	Fermanagh	H074537	244.87	SAC
UK0030180	Lecale Fens	Down	J451387	40.87	SAC
UK0030047	Lough Melvin	Fermanagh	G921532	516.43	SAC
UK0016621	Magheraveely Marl Loughs	Fermanagh	H478269	58.78	SAC
UK0016613	Magilligan	Londonderry	C686371	1058.22	SAC
UK0030199	Main Valley Bogs	Antrim	D034195	186.2	SAC
UK0016619	Monawilkin	Fermanagh	H090533	174.78	SAC
UK0030211	Moneygal Bog	Tyrone	H238883	155.79	SAC
UK0030212	Moninea Bog	Fermanagh	H299215	44.74	SAC
UK0030214	Montiaghs Moss	Antrim	J091654	151.28	SAC
UK0016612	Murlough	Down	J445313	11902.03	SAC
UK0030224	North Antrim Coast	Antrim	D022440	314.59	SAC
UK0030233	Owenkillew River	Tyrone	H559870	213.46	SAC
UK0030236	Peatlands Park	Armagh	H907608	207.3	SAC
UK0016607	Pettigoe Plateau	Fermanagh	G988634	1264.32	SAC
UK0030055	Rathlin Island	Antrim	D133518	3344.62	SAC
UK0030244	Rea's Wood and	Antrim	J141857	41.81	SAC

EU Code	Name	Local Authority	Grid Ref	Area (ha)	Status
	Farr`s Bay				
UK0030320	River Foyle and Tributaries	Tyrone	H353876	770.12	SAC
UK0030360	River Roe and Tributaries	Londonderry	IC687159	407.6	Candidate
UK0030268	Rostrevor Wood	Down	J186173	16.63	SAC
UK0016622	Slieve Beagh	Fermanagh; Tyrone	H524447	1884.68	SAC
UK0030277	Slieve Gullion	Armagh	J023210	612.13	SAC
UK0016618	Strangford Lough	Down	J559577	15398.54	SAC
UK0016608	Teal Lough	Londonderry; Tyrone	H737879	198.22	SAC
UK0030325	Tonnagh Beg Bog	Tyrone	H412599	55.6	SAC
UK0030326	Tully Bog	Tyrone	H419754	35.99	SAC
UK0030291	Turmennan	Down	J485503	14.83	SAC
UK0030296	Upper Ballinderry River	Tyrone	H734792	58.8	SAC
UK0016614	Upper Lough Erne	Fermanagh	H329279	5738.38	SAC
UK0030300	West Fermanagh Scarplands	Fermanagh	H085491	2270.35	SAC
UK0030303	Wolf Island Bog	Londonderry	C922080	118.02	SAC

3. SACs and cSACs in Northern Ireland which adjoin SACs in the Republic of Ireland

Northern Ireland SAC		Republic of Ireland SAC	
<i>Site code</i>	<i>Site name</i>	<i>Site code</i>	<i>Site name</i>
UK0016603	Cuilcagh Mountain	IE0000584	Cuilcagh-Anieran Uplands
UK0030047	Lough Melvin	IE0000428	Lough Melvin
UK0016621	Magheraveely Marl Lakes	IE0001786	Kilrooskey Lough Cluster
UK0016607	Pettigo Plateau	IE0001992	Tamur Bog
UK0016607	Pettigo Plateau	IE0002164	Lough Golagh and Breesy Hill
UK0030320	River Foyle and Tributaries	IE0002301	River Finn