



Strangford Lough and Lecale is a place of contrasts, from the exposed outer coast and the fast flowing "Narrows" entrance to the Lough to the calm expanses of the northern sandflats.

The Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership works with partners and stakeholders to ensure sustainable management of the AONB which relies



Strangford and Lecale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Area: 52,761 ha

This coastal area follows the shores of a nearly landlocked inland sea and extends inland up the Quoile River, dominated by the historic town of Downpatrick, and south along the outward-facing shore of the Irish Sea. The lowland landforms tell the story of Northern Ireland's glacial past; drumlin hilltops poking from sea to form the hundreds of islets of Strangford Lough.

Perhaps nowhere else in Northern Ireland is the interplay between land and water so evident. Not only is there contrast between the expansive open Lough and sea and the surrounding hillslopes, but also at a smaller scale between the marshy hollows and river valleys and the 'basket of eggs' hills that contain them. The character of the shores varies too, from the Lough's extensive mudflats (so valuable to the wintering wildfowl) to rocky bays, sweeping sandy strands and soft low cliffs on coast fringing the Irish Sea.

At the northern end of Strangford Lough, Scrabo Hill capped by its tower forms a prominent landmark. Below the waters, the hidden riches of this habitat have led to the Lough being designated as a marine nature reserve. As one travels south, you reach the windswept Lecale area, remote in character and with a distinctive local identity strongly influenced by the area's numerous ancient sites and attractive coastal settlements. Killard Point and Cloghy Rocks are excellent places to quietly watch the life of the seal colonies.

Towards Dundrum Bay, the area is increasingly influenced by the brooding presence of the Mourne Mountains; the low hills of Lecale affording spectacular views across the bay to the hills beyond.

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