Strangford Lough and Lecale

Strangford and Lecale Area of Outstanding Beauty (AONB)

National Nature Reserves and Nature Reserves

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Minister’s Foreword

The Strangford Lough and Lecale Area is remarkable for its concentration of heritage assets. This is recognised through its many international and domestic designations for nature conservation – the marine life, the birds and maritime vegetation – and its numerous listed buildings, scheduled monuments and historic monuments in State Care – from Neolithic through Early Christian to Norman, Plantation and Early Modern periods. These are set within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty characterised by an enchanting blend of water, tidal flats and rocky coasts, drumlin fields and craggy hills, wooded estates and landscaped gardens. The Area also boasts a unique cultural heritage which includes St Patrick and the earliest sites of his Christian mission to Ireland, farming and maritime traditions, and a wealth of literary, musical and artistic associations.

This Strategy recognises the importance of the Area for these assets and aims to protect and conserve its treasures while providing for their enjoyment in the context of a healthy community and thriving economy.

The accompanying Action Plan identifies a series of Objectives and Actions to be implemented by a range of statutory and non-statutory bodies towards achieving these overarching aims under the leadership of my Department and the Local Authorities responsible for the Area.

I am pleased to recognise the excellent work done by the Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership in engaging with the local community and many others with a stake in the Area in identifying the management issues needing to be addressed and in gathering ideas as to how this can be done in a way which benefits both the environment and the people who use the Area.

I commend the Strategy to the relevant government departments, to the bodies represented on the Partnership and to the wider public and encourage them all to work together to deliver the Actions. The Strategy provides a vision through which the local community can prosper while the special features of the Area can be maintained and enjoyed by visitors from across the world.

Mark H Durkan
Minister of the Environment
Views from the rugged Lecale coast towards the Mournes. Many ships have been wrecked on these ancient rocks over the centuries.
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### Minister’s Foreword

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1. INTRODUCTION AND VISION

Strangford Lough and Lecale is outstandingly beautiful with one of the world’s finest examples of drumlin hill and island landscapes. It is of international importance for its marine life and coastal birds and it is renowned for its Christian and maritime heritage.

The stunning coastline is convoluted and varied with stretches of jagged, rocky coast, long sandy beaches and dunes, lovely hidden bays, saltmarsh and vast, calm expanses of sandflat.

The adjacent farmland is distinctive as it follows the contours of the land. Hedges criss cross the drumlins and some are punctuated with attractive stone gateposts and traditional metal gates. Small wetlands lie between the hills. Large estates contribute many fine houses, woods and parkland.

People have lived in this area and used its resources for over 9,000 years. The earliest people have left behind fascinating stone cairns and spiritual sites.

This is where St Patrick arrived to spread Christianity to the island of Ireland and we are transported back through ecclesiastical history as we step into tiny ancient churches, or admire the awesome and beautiful architecture of the early monasteries.

Everywhere there is evidence of our maritime built heritage including St John’s Point lighthouse, fine fishing ports, lovely stone quays and towns and villages built on seafaring trade and industry. Square, medieval tower houses and the remains of windmills from the 1700s are also prominent.
The varied habitats and conditions have given rise to an extraordinary variety and abundance of wildlife.

Over 2000 marine species are found in Strangford Lough alone. Seals, basking sharks and octopus are among the many animals that captivate us. Lobsters, crabs and scallops are probably most often encountered on the dinner plate. Many creatures and seaweeds can be found as the tide recedes exposing a great restaurant for coastal birds and a natural wonderland for us to explore.

Tens of thousands of birds make extraordinary journeys here every year, against all the odds, travelling from Arctic Canada and Eastern Europe to their winter feeding grounds. Others come in summer from as far south as Africa and the Antarctic to nest and feed here.

Despite having such incredible wildlife spectacles this is no wilderness and today, about one million people live within an hour’s drive of the area and a growing number visit from further afield.

Farming and fishing families and the wider community of people who live here have helped shape the landscape and continue to be at the centre of managing and celebrating our shared heritage.

While there is considerable wealth, this area also has some of the most disadvantaged areas in Northern Ireland, with related high unemployment, poorer health, and lower employment skills. (Appendix 1: NI Multiple Deprivation Measures)
Food production remains hugely important, while tourism, craft and marine research & development (especially with regard to renewable energy technology) are amongst the newer industries. Outdoor recreation is increasingly important as it not only boosts the local economy but also brings huge benefits to people’s health and sense of well-being.

Through this strategy the Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership (SLLP - see page 58) aims to sustain, enhance and celebrate our heritage and the achievements of the people who shape it. It puts a high quality environment and heritage at the heart of developing local skills, fostering local business and maintaining people’s health and well-being. Its core values are those of sustainable development, managing natural capital and local empowerment.

“This sustain, enhance and celebrate our heritage and the achievements of the people who shape it. It puts a high quality environment and heritage at the heart of developing local skills, fostering local business and maintaining people’s health and well-being.”
The landscape, built heritage and natural environment of Strangford and Lecale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty are fundamental to the well-being and vibrancy of local communities.

Our heritage attracts and interests visitors, and generates wealth.

For these reasons, as well as for their intrinsic value, we must work together to protect and enhance our heritage, while fostering appropriate human activities and developments.
The Strategy and Action Plan cover the period 2013-2018 (and beyond) and will be subject to a rolling annual review and update. It has been developed and will be implemented across a range of statutory authorities and other organisations working together to shared objectives.

The SLLP Office will take the lead on some strategic initiatives especially those where no one authority has particular responsibilities, but the strategy’s success will rest with many authorities and with local groups and individuals.

The Strategy focuses on the lands designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty plus the designated marine areas, but it also takes into account adjacent designated sites and heritage areas on the Ards Peninsula, especially in terms of tourism and biodiversity.

In developing this Strategy and Action Plan the Partnership has taken account of the many policies, strategies and plans that relate to aspects of heritage management with a view to both integrating and influencing them in the future.

Aims and Objectives have been prioritised through:
- consideration of policy and the political context
- a review of existing and proposed strategies, plans and projects
- consultation with the Advisory Committee of stakeholders
- feedback from Public Roadshows

This Strategy does not describe the extensive routine heritage monitoring, conservation and communication work undertaken by the range of authorities, Non-Government Organisations and sectoral interests relevant to the heritage of Strangford Lough and Lecale. This work is essential to achieving the Objectives and it is assumed that it will continue over the period of the Strategy.

This document describes the heritage, some of the key issues and the strategic aims and objectives.

Working group reports and the Action Plan are available to download from strangfordlough.org
The Heritage of Strangford Lough and Lecale
Drumlin hills and islands provide a gentle, beguiling landscape.
The patterns of the enclosed sea lough with its 70 or so islands and numerous pladdies (submerged at high tide) are echoed inland with hills and inter-drumlin wetlands.

The drumlins were revealed over 13,000 years ago, when the ice sheets that had covered the land up to 1 km deep, finally melted. The islands are drowned drumlins in various stages of erosion.

The shore is very varied. Stretches of sandy beach, fen, scoured rocky plateaux, rocky foreshore, saltmarsh and mudflat are punctuated by strong landmarks all around the water's edge - coastal lighthouses, headlands, rocky harbours, quays, tower houses and windmills.

Strangford Lough is a large shallow sea lough, approximately 30km long, covering an area of 150km² with about one third of its seabed exposed at low tide including the vast northern sandflats. It is almost fully saline except at the mouths of the rivers Enler and Quoile, and where several streams drain into it.

As the current speed drops further into the Lough, cobbles, gravels and other finer sediments, cover the bed and shores. The finest mud and sand forms extensive tidal flats. The Lough has a deep “y” shaped channel running up its centre but for the most part is less than 10m in depth.

In general, the northeast of County Down is characterised by neat, fertile, hedged, drumlin farmlands, including some of the most productive agricultural land in Ulster. Raised beach deposits extend some distance inland on the Ards peninsula where they provide broad, fertile flats of shelly and pebbly soils amidst the heavier clays of the drumlins.
The open skies and enclosed water of the lowlands are overlooked by the distinctive crag and tail of Scrabo Hill whose hard, volcanic, dolerite rock protected the underlying softer sandstone from erosion by the ice sheet that created the surrounding drumlins, leaving it to dominate the Lough’s northern shores.

Further south the trim-hedged fields are replaced by small stone-walled fields on the higher ground of Ballyquintin Point across the Strangford Narrows and into Lecale.

South again, the coastal farmlands of the Lecale Coast once more provide richer farmland, particularly on the claimed marshlands and areas of lighter soil. The Sheeplands of Lecale have distinctive earth banks to delineate fields.

The coast of Lecale has a windswept, remote character. It retains a distinctive local identity and is steeped in the past, with numerous ancient sites.

This southern part of Strangford and Lecale is also characterised by raised beaches as well as injections of volcanic rocks (known as dykes) creating a distinctive rocky shoreline and good natural harbours.

In sharp contrast there are long sandy beaches and dunes at Minerstown and Tyrella.
The rocks and stones of Strangford Lough and Lecale characterise the place and the dark Silurian shales and soft coloured sandstones found all along the coast are echoed in the quays, sea-walls and buildings.

Tides, light, temperature and winds play an important role in the ever-changing nature of the coastal landscape and its biodiversity. The area has a mild climate and the prevailing winds are west to southwest. It is one of the driest parts of Ireland with relatively low rainfall.

“*The drumlins were revealed over 13,000 years ago, when the ice sheets that had covered the land up to 1 km deep, finally melted.*"
Lough Money Dolmen. Megaliths such as this one and the many other cairns and standing stones take us back to the earliest people who left their mark on the landscape.
The old Irish name for Strangford Lough was Loch Cuan – lough of the harbours. Literature tells that the Irish Sea god Manannan Mac Lir, in grief-induced rage over the killing of his son, let forth an outburst of water which formed Waterford, Dundrum Bay and Strangford Lough (Metrical Dindshenchas Gwynn 1924, 1991, 147).

However, it was the Viking invaders who arrived in their long boats through the fast flowing waters of the narrow channel at the Lough’s entrance that bestowed the name Strangford from “Strangfjothr” or “strong fjord”. Little remains to be seen of their presence, though their seafaring culture is still celebrated here.

Known by the ancient name of Magh-Inis, “the island plain”, Lecale was enclosed to the north by Strangford Lough, to the east by the Irish Sea, and to the west by the tidal estuaries of the Blackstaff and Quoile rivers. It was the core territory of the Dal Fiatach who had strong associations with the sea. It was later known as Leath Cathail “Cathal’s half or division” or Lecale, from a compromise between the two main branches of the Dal Fiatach, the Ui Blathmeic, and the Leath Cathail.

This area has strong associations with early Christianity and Saint Patrick is believed to have arrived on the shores of Strangford Lough before establishing Ireland’s first Christian church at Saul and he is said to be buried at Downpatrick (Muirchu, 1185). Christianity was spread throughout Ireland from here from the 5th century and the area has a legacy of impressive monastic sites and churches as well as crosses and holy wells.

Maritime features abound with fishing ports, lighthouses and other aids to navigation, harbours, quays, intertidal fish traps, kelp grids and shore boundaries.
The distinctive, fine, stone tower houses of the Anglo-Normans command good views over water and land, which would have assisted in their defence.

The grand estates of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries have also left their mark on the landscape. Mount Stewart and Castle Ward estates are now open to the public through the National Trust.

Individual farms and land holdings continue to shape our countryside and distinctive farm gateways, boundaries, corbelled pigsties and windmill towers enhance the landscape. This area had the highest concentration of windmills in Ireland partly due to the high coastal winds and shortage of mill rivers.

In Lecale there are strong and often ancient field patterns, clachans and interesting remains of early settlement, distinctive and historic harbour towns, lighthouses and castles. Settlements are generally small and tightly clustered in sheltered sites.

The Department of the Environment (DOE) has scheduled monuments, listed buildings and owns/manages many properties. It is working to make these safer and more accessible to the public as well as attending to their conservation. New interpretation and the use of re-enactment characters bring history to life and related activities contribute to festival and community events. Town and villages may also have Conservation Areas.

Killyleagh Castle is the family home of the Rowan Hamiltons, one of the families whose ancestors helped shape the area’s townscapes.

St John’s Point is the tallest lighthouse in Ireland.

Audley’s Castle at Castle Ward.
Dereliction of private property and uncared for spaces is a big concern. Local council building control officers and many local community regeneration groups are trying to address this problem. This work should be further encouraged and the DOE’s information and guidance promoted.

There is scope within community plans to write in what the community values and wants to keep as well as new ideas and local people can play a key role.

This area’s rich history and built heritage makes it an ideal place for case studies and project work. There is an opportunity to further develop heritage education materials and projects working with many organisations and groups to help enthuse and inform the next generation.

Dereliction in settlements is one of the public’s greatest concerns.

People, Place and Built Heritage goals:
Keep local people at the centre of communicating and conserving this area’s heritage and support initiatives that create related jobs, skills development, wealth and wellbeing.
Enhance people’s sense of place, raise the area’s profile, attract visitors and provide new heritage experiences for local people and visitors through the area’s built heritage and archaeology.
Maritime heath hums and buzzes with life in the summer
Over 2,000 marine species have been recorded in Strangford Lough alone and it is tremendously important for biodiversity. The more eye-catching animals include octopus, conger eels, angler fish and multi-coloured wrasse.

The sides of the Narrows are draped in huge colourful sponges and brilliant soft corals. Elsewhere the seabed is carpeted with brittle stars, sea anemones, and sea squirts.

Horse mussel beds have declined but still provide one of the richest habitats in the Lough with about 200 associated species.

The extraordinary variety of living spaces and conditions give rise to Strangford Lough and Lecale’s equally varied and abundant wildlife. The relationships between them all are complex and finely balanced.

Seaweeds come in many shapes and sizes, they provide shade, shelter and food for animals and add nutrients to the water

Seaweeds shelter animals in the sea and on the shore and large quantities of dead seaweed accumulate on the strand line providing a rich habitat for sand-hoppers and seaweed flies, which in turn are food for birds and small animals. When it rots this seaweed puts valuable nutrients back into the sea.

Huge flocks of waders are a wonderful sight – mainly oystercatchers and knot here. Different birds have bills of different length and shape to forage for different creatures in the mud and sand so there is something for everyone

The arrival of huge flocks of birds, often over 70,000 water birds every autumn is a cause for celebration and awe and is part of the rhythm of the year for local people. These birds overwinter on the extensive mudflats to feast on eelgrass, green seaweeds and invertebrates. Strangford Lough attracts up to 80% of the Canadian population of pale bellied Brent geese through October / November.
These wildfowl and waders undertake arduous and incredible journeys from Arctic Canada and Eastern Europe using this area as a staging post and also as a final destination. They get here exhausted, nervous and underweight and for this reason it is particularly important that they are not disturbed on first arrival. When you think that these birds can only feed when the tide is out, mostly during the day, and when you consider the huge effort it takes for a bird to lift in flight you realise how important it is to avoid causing them to rise.

**Lapwings Vanellus vanellus can be seen on the shore or on farmland**

Birds that nest on or beside the shore run the risk of having their well camouflaged eggs trampled and people are asked to avoid certain islands and areas of shore during the nesting season. Predators such as rats pose a real threat to nests on islands.

**Harbour seals Phoca vitulina haul out to rest**

Strangford Lough is an important breeding site for harbour (common) seals. Grey seals, porpoise and otters are also present.

Spotting and photographing wildlife is a huge interest for many people. If seals are hauled out just make sure you do not get so close that they are forced into the water – you can tell they are getting anxious if they are constantly scanning in your direction. Dead seals have been found in the area with injuries from power boat propellers and people are asked to lower speed near haul outs. Food availability is also a major issue for seals.

Throughout the spring and summer, the coast is dappled with sea aster, scurvy grass, thrift, sea campion, mayweed and sea lavender. Alkaline grasslands such as those at Killard and Ballyquintin are famed for their orchids and are carpeted in wild flowers from May to August each year. Wild thyme, stonecrops, and spring squills grow in thin soils and remnants of maritime heath with bell heather grow on acid soils. On deeper soils, scrub forms with gorse, brambles, roses, blackthorn and elder.

Saltmarsh is a rare habitat in Northern Ireland but Strangford Lough and Lecale have some of the best examples of it.

**Terns are amongst our important summer visitors. They travel from as far away as the Antarctic to nest on islands here and it is a great sight to see these slender, elegant birds diving for small fish.**

**Pintail duck Anas acuta**

**Spring Squill, Sillica verna, known as the flower of County Down**
Rock outcrops immediately above the shore show a profusion of black, yellow and grey lichens, zoned according to the amount of wave splash.

The area’s characteristic hedgerows and interdrumlin wetlands have a thriving biodiversity. There are also pockets of woodland and the Ards Peninsula is one of the last bastions of the red squirrel, _Sclurus vulgaris_.

Water quality in the area is generally good, although there are locally significant effects from discharges of storm water and sewage and agricultural run off from adjacent fields or via watercourses such as the Quoile.

The DOE working with local councils, the Maritime Coastguard Agency and others has emergency incident plans in place in the event of a disaster such as an oil spill in the Irish Sea.

Local Biodiversity Action Plans have been drawn up for Down District and for Ards and North Down with actions to help conserve, enhance and raise awareness of the biodiversity of the area for the future.

Strangford Lough is one of the highest ranking marine environment sites in Europe reflected in its many national and international designations.

All of Strangford Lough and much of the Lecale and Outer Ards coasts are Areas of Special Scientific Interest.

Strangford Lough, Hollymount Forest, Ballykilbeg Wetland, Turmennan Mire and Lecale Fens are Special Areas of Conservation.

Strangford Lough, Killough Harbour and Outer Ards are Special Protection Areas.

Strangford Lough was designated Northern Ireland’s first Marine Conservation Zone under the Marine Act. (see page 27)

Over and above these designations we should strive to maintain healthy ecosystems because they provide us with many of the environmental ‘goods and services’ that sustain our lives.
Bloody Henry, Henricia oculata
STRANGFORD LOUGH EUROPEAN MARINE SITE

Strangford Lough’s nature conservation importance has been recognised by a host of both national and international designations. It is part of the Europe-wide network of Natura 2000 (N2K) and European Marine Sites (EMS), which aim to protect the range of important European habitats and species and to maintain the European Union’s overall biodiversity.

N2K sites include Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs), which are covered by the EC Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora) and Birds Directive (Council Directive 2009/147/EC on the conservation of wild birds), respectively. These designations are very significant because they place statutory responsibilities on public bodies to safeguard the nature conservation interests of Europe’s network of sites. Any developments within these sites should be environmentally sustainable. A European Marine Site is not a statutory site designation, but refers to the marine areas of both SACs and SPAs.

Strangford Lough is covered by both SAC and SPA designation, as well as being a European Marine Site. Strangford Lough EMS includes the intertidal areas of five Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI): Strangford Lough Parts 1, 2 and 3, Ballyquintin Point and Killard. The landward boundary of the EMS is the high water mark, and the seaward boundary extends out beyond low water mark to include the waters of the Lough.

Strangford Lough’s 1995 designation as a Marine Nature Reserve (MNR) has now been superseded by the Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013: Strangford Lough MNR became Strangford Lough Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) when this legislation came into operation on 17 September 2013. Strangford Lough also qualifies as a Ramsar site because of its international importance as a wetland which supports important wetland features and internationally important numbers of wintering and breeding birds.

“These designations place statutory responsibilities on public bodies to conserve the nature conservation interests.”
Conservation Objectives and Responsibilities

The Conservation Objectives for the SAC and SPA were drawn up by the Department of the Environment (DOE), but all public bodies have a legal responsibility to help deliver these objectives when they are exercising their functions. This particularly applies to Marine Division, Northern Ireland Environment Agency and Planning Division (which are all part of the Department of the Environment), Fisheries Division of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) and both Ards Borough Council and Down District Council. The majority of both the foreshore and the seabed of Strangford Lough are owned by the Crown Estate. In addition to public bodies, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) such as the National Trust have an important practical role because of their extensive ownership within Strangford Lough, as well as their conservation and wildlife monitoring work.

Guidance

The Department of the Environment is required to provide guidance to relevant competent authorities on the management of any activities or issues that might adversely affect the Strangford Lough European Marine Site (EMS). This assists those authorities in fulfilling their statutory responsibilities as set out by the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995, better known as the Habitats Regulations, and other relevant legislation. (See Appendix 3: EU Marine Site)

Monitoring and Review

A mechanism for monitoring and review enables the DOE to follow the condition of the EMS and use that information to inform future actions across the authorities.

Management

The Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership provides the management structure for the Strangford Lough EMS, which includes the marine elements of the Strangford Lough Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Area (SPA). The Heritage Management Strategy and Action Plan incorporates the EMS Management Scheme which is not a statutory instrument, but a voluntary agreement between the statutory agencies that will implement the scheme and the local communities who use and have a vested interest in the area.

Many local people and landowners are already managing the area’s natural resources to the benefit of the EMS. The Heritage Management Action Plan has identified ways to support this and also to work with stakeholders to develop further initiatives and voluntary measures. Many activities are controlled through existing legislation such as ASSI, planning and fisheries legislation. The system is kept under review.

European Marine Site Conservation Features Strangford Lough Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

1. Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide

The intertidal mudflats and sandflats in the north of Strangford Lough are the largest single continuous area of this habitat in Northern Ireland. The northern flats support luxuriant beds of eelgrasses (mainly Zostera marina) which are rare in the British Isles. The muds and muddy sands also support a number of invertebrates- worms and shellfish. The intertidal mudflats (particularly the Zostera beds) are also of great importance as feeding areas for the large numbers of wildfowl and waders that over-winter on the Lough.

The 2007 condition assessment found that this feature was in favourable condition.
2. Coastal Lagoons

The Dorn is a silled lagoon on the eastern side of Strangford Lough near Ardkeen. The Dorn, from the Gaelic word for ‘narrow channel’, refers specifically to the channel which connects a series of very sheltered bays to the main Lough. Near the mouth, rock barriers or sills act as dams to hold back water as the tide falls, creating saltwater rapids which are unique in Ireland.

In the area of the Dorn rapids, abundant growths of sea anemones, sponges and ascidians clothe the rock and boulders. Several of the animals found here normally occur in relatively deep water. The channel immediately above the sill has fast tidal streams without turbulence, enabling sponges to grow to exceptional proportions. The main trough of the Dorn supports a dense forest of seaweeds and the gravelly-sand bottom has unusually dense colonies of some worms and shellfish. The sheltered marine ‘ponds’ behind the Dorn sill feature beds of common eelgrass and green seaweeds.

The 2007 condition assessment found that this feature was in favourable condition.

3. Large shallow inlets and bays

Strangford Lough is an outstanding example of a large, enclosed fjardic sea lough. Fjards are found in areas of low-lying ground which have been subject to glacial scouring. They have a highly irregular outline, no main channel and lack the high relief and U-shaped cross-section of fjordic sea lochs.

Sea water enters Strangford Lough through a narrow entrance, expanding into a broad, mostly shallow basin that has a central channel 30-60m deep, which carries rapid currents and causes great turbulence in some parts. With a wide range of tidal stream strengths and depths, there is a remarkable marine fauna within Strangford Lough and it is one of the most diverse sea lochs in the UK. The communities present range from the very rich high-energy communities near the Narrows and the mouth of the Lough which depend on rapid tidal streams, to communities in extreme shelter where fine muds support burrowing brittlestars, Dublin Bay prawn (Nephrops norvegicus), and a rich community associated with horse mussels (Modiolus modiolus).

The 2007 condition assessment found that this feature was in favourable condition.
4. Reefs

Reefs in Strangford Lough vary from tide-swept bedrock and large boulders in the main channel of the Narrows, through sand-scoured bedrock and boulders at either end of the channel, to more sheltered bedrock and boulders in the main central portion of the Lough and in parts of the intertidal. Beds of horse mussels (*Modiolus modiolus*) used to form extensive biogenic reefs within the central portion of the Lough.

In the Strangford Narrows, rock surfaces are entirely clothed in colourful soft coral, sponges (some reaching huge sizes), ascidians and sea-anemones. Large boulders on the bed of the Narrows are subject to strong tidal streams. These boulders are clothed with encrusting sponges, hydroids, and sea anemones. Coarse sand scours rock surfaces at the sides and either end of the Narrows. Here, the characteristic species is the bryozoan *Flustra foliacea*.

Glaciated or sea-worn bedrock outcrops are found at many locations. Massive boulders occur on the shore and form rocky islands known as ‘pladdies’. The fauna and flora associated with these outcrops are dependent on the rock type, their position and the prevailing conditions.

Horse mussel beds form one of the richest communities in the Lough, with about 200 associated species growing and sheltering on the hard surface of live mussels and dead mussel shells. Full development of the community depends on the very sheltered, plankton-rich waters of extremely low turbidity found in the central to northern area. *M. modiolus* rarely occurs in such still waters. Many mobile suspension-feeders also occur, particularly the scallop *Chlamys varia*, and brittlestars in the central to south-western area where water movement is slightly greater.

The 2007 condition assessment found that this feature was in unfavourable condition because of the reduction in the extent of the Horse Mussel beds. Site specific action: To implement the *Modiolus Restoration Programme* See Appendix 4: *Modiolus Restoration Programme*:

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SAC Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site

1. Annual vegetation of drift lines (terrestrial feature not included in the EMS)

This habitat type occurs on deposits of shingle lying at or above mean high-water spring tides. The most extensive drift line communities occur along the shores at the southern end of the Lough. The distinctive vegetation, which may form only sparse cover, is ephemeral and composed of annual or short-lived perennial species, such as sea sandwort, sea Mayweed, sea rocket, spear-leaved orache and sea beet. This feature is in favourable condition.
2. Perennial vegetation of stony banks (terrestrial feature not included in the EMS)

These shingle structures develop when a sequence of foreshore beaches is deposited at the limit of high tide, and more permanent ridges are formed when storm waves throw pebbles high up on the beach, from where the backwash cannot remove them. In Strangford Lough, this feature occurs at Gransha Point south of Kircubbin. Associated vegetation includes curled dock, yellow horned-poppy, sea kale and sea pea. In more stable areas of shingle above this zone that are influenced by sea spray, the plant communities are dominated by salt-tolerant species such as thrift and sea campion, often in a matrix with abundant lichens. The 2004 condition assessment found that this feature was unfavourable because the vegetation had been altered by intensive management and eutrophication. Site specific action: Seek management agreements that aim to manage livestock grazing in this feature at sustainable levels.

3. Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand

This pioneer saltmarsh vegetation colonises intertidal mud and sandflats in areas protected from strong wave action. It develops at the lower reaches of saltmarshes where the vegetation is frequently flooded by the tide, and also colonises open creek sides and depressions within saltmarshes. In Strangford, this habitat is mostly confined to sheltered areas on the eastern side of the lough.

This habitat typically comprises a small number of species. It is dominated by glasswort and seablite.

The 2008 condition assessments found that this feature was in unfavourable condition due to the high frequency of *Spartina anglica*. Site specific action: Programme to remove invasive species *S. angelica* primarily by spraying.

Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae)

Atlantic salt meadows develop when salt-tolerant plants colonise soft intertidal muds and sands in areas that are protected from strong wave action. The vegetation varies with the frequency, the duration of tidal inundation and the amount of grazing by domestic livestock. In Strangford, there is a relatively extensive area of saltmarsh around the mouth of the Enler River near Comber, and smaller areas of saltmarsh occur near Greyabbey and Newtownards, at Saltwater Bridge and at the innermost region of The Dorn. Small, isolated pockets of saltmarsh also occur along the shores at the southern end of the Lough. Although they are small and scattered in occurrence, they are important because of the diversity of species and rarity of the habitat in Northern Ireland.

The 2008 condition assessments found that this feature was in unfavourable condition due to the high frequency of *Spartina anglica*. Site specific action: Programme to remove invasive species *S. angelica* primarily by spraying with herbicide.
SAC Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection

1. Harbour or Common seal
   *Phoca vitulina*

About 50% of the EU population of harbour (common) seals breed in the UK. They are smaller than the grey seal and are generally grey/brown in colour, made up of a mottle of dark spots on a lighter background. They are often seen on the shore in quite large groups. Common seals return to the same haul-out site day after day and females give birth to a single pup between June and July. Seal pups can swim and dive from birth, and are good swimmers by the time they are weaned during late July.

Strangford Lough is the most important breeding site for common seal in Ireland, and North Boretree Rock off Mount Stewart is one of the largest haul-outs in the Lough. Common seals can be seen anywhere in the Lough, but they are easiest to spot on rocky haul-outs close to the shore, such as Cloghy Rocks to the south of Strangford village, Castle Ward Bay, Granagh Bay south of Portaferry and near Ballyhenry Island just north of Portaferry.

The 2007 condition assessment found that this feature was in favourable condition.

**Strangford Lough Special Protection Area (SPA)**

The diversity of sheltered estuarine habitats in Strangford Lough means that it is the most important coastal site in Northern Ireland for wintering water birds, holding large numbers of geese, ducks and waders. It is world famous as the main arrival site for most of the Canadian population of pale-bellied Brent goose *Branta bernicla hrota*, which arrive in autumn to spend the winter in our warmer climate. Most of the geese disperse to other sites in Ireland, but substantial flocks can be seen all winter on the mudflats near Newtownards, feeding amid vast concentrations of wintering wildfowl. In summer, the lough supports three species of breeding terns.

A number of SPA bird species roost or feed on areas outside the EMS boundary. These areas are important for the maintenance of these species, sites occurring outside the extent of natural or semi-natural habitat, together with agriculturally improved areas utilised by swans and geese, have not been included within the boundary of the SPA, but their importance must not be underestimated.

Strangford Lough qualifies as an SPA under Articles 4.1 and 4.2 of the European Birds Directive.

The Common Standards Monitoring (CSM) baseline is the number which must be exceeded for the feature to be in favourable condition. Numbers are based on 5 year peak mean figures of individuals. The current figures are from 2005/6 to 2009/10.

1. **Article 4.1:** Strangford Lough supports populations of European importance of the following species listed on Annex I of the Directive

   a. *Arctic Tern* *Sterna paradisaea*, CSM 47. Currently 567
b. Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*, CSM 560
*Currently 944*

c. Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*, 346
*Currently 1,430*

The 2013 condition report concluded that this feature is favourable because all three breeding tern species have increased significantly.

**Article 4.2:** Strangford Lough supports populations of European importance of the following migratory species

a. **Knot** *Calidris canutus*, CSM 4,200
*Currently 6,520*

b. **Light-bellied Brent Goose** *Branta bernicla hrota*, CSM 8,367 *Currently 25,735*

c. **Redshank** *Tringa totanus*, CSM 2,336
*Currently 4,243*

The 2013 condition report concluded that this feature is favourable because the wintering populations of knot, light-bellied Brent goose and redshank have increased significantly since the designation of Strangford Lough as an SPA.

The 2013 condition report concluded that this feature is **favourable**.

3. Although not listed by Europe as SPA features, Strangford Lough also supports populations of European importance of the following migratory species. These species warrant inclusion on the list of SPA features and their status will be reassessed when NIEA implements the 2013 SPA review. Even though they are not currently SPA features, they must be protected under the Habitats Regulations.

   a. **Bar-tailed Godwit** _Limosa lapponica_, CSM 291. Currently 1,068
b. **Golden Plover** *Pluvialis apricaria*,
CSM 6,526. Currently 7,723

c. **Shelduck** *Tadorna tadorna*, CSM 1,755.
Currently 4,408.
Providing children with a taste of outdoor adventure is a gift that will benefit them mentally and physically. People can camp or stay in the bothy on Salt Island.
OUTDOOR RECREATION

Outdoor Recreation* is of growing importance to this area as a source of revenue and employment but also for its potential health and well-being benefits to local people and visitors.

People involved in outdoor activities also want to take in the scenery, explore the incredible historic sites, encounter animals such as seals and red squirrels and be uplifted and inspired by wildlife spectacles such as carpets of coastal wildflowers in summer and tens of thousands of overwintering birds in winter.

Dramatic changes in tidal conditions, water depths and coastline provide many different opportunities for water based recreation - from beginners to the most experienced.

There are 12 sailing and boat clubs within the AONB (more than the whole of the rest of NI) and others on the adjacent outer Ards Peninsula. Ardglass Marina has 80 berths and can be used by local (55 berths) and visiting yachts (25 berths). There are pontoons at Portaferry and at Strangford. Aids to Navigation installed in Strangford Lough in 2010 have improved safety, particularly for visiting boats.

Strangford Lough has a canoe / paddling trail that meanders through scenic islands and includes the opportunity to camp or spend a night in a bothy on Salt Island. Work done by the SLLP in 2011/12 indicates that there is a strong interest in rowing and paddling amongst communities and these are fast growing activities in the UK and elsewhere.

The Lecale coast is thought by many to offer the best coasteering venue in Northern Ireland, as well as providing a dramatic coastal walk.

Diving continues to be popular for the range of challenges it offers, its marine life and many ship wrecks. Dive companies and clubs using the area have requested guidance and information to help them to use the resource sustainably and to enhance and promote the activity.

*Outdoor Recreation, as defined by Sport NI, is sport and physical recreation that takes place in the natural environment whether on land, water or air. It provides access to, and may impact upon, the natural environment.
Yet despite all of this local people and visitors feel there is a lack of opportunity to engage in water based activities. Developing public access to the water is not just about new facilities and access points but also about providing a coordinated system of opportunity through clubs, outdoor recreation providers and events targeted at key audiences including local people. Building a local skill set and enthusiasm is essential to provide local health and well-being benefits and also to build visitor activities. Have-a-go and training sessions are needed.

With regard to land based recreation, the aim in this strategy is to develop and promote short to medium heritage walks especially around and between settlements. This is intended to increase local use across a range of abilities and also to provide activities for visitors and to make the heritage more accessible.

Horse riding takes place mainly along green lanes and country roads. There is a toll horse ride at the Rosemount Country Estate.

The growth in cycling is evidenced by the number of regular road events held in the area. Off road cycling trails have been developed at Castle Ward. Cycling will be promoted as part of the outdoor recreation offering.

Wildfowling continues to be managed through the National Trust Wildlife Scheme. This Scheme and the work of wildfowlers in conservation will be highlighted through the Action Plan.
Two outdoor recreation companies are now based within the AONB and others use it regularly. There are also Education Board outdoor activity centres at Killyleagh and at Delamont.

Those involved in outdoor recreation can be amongst the best ambassadors for the area’s heritage and are well placed to play an active role in caring for it. The focus of this strategy is to encourage sustainable activities and develop guidance and codes of practice to reduce any negative impact on the environment or conflict with other activities.

Outdoor Recreation goal: To support the sustainable growth of outdoor recreation companies, clubs and activities to create jobs, assist the local economy and safeguard wildlife and have local people engaged in outdoor recreation for their health and well-being and for the area’s heritage management.

“Local people and visitors feel there is a lack of opportunity to engage in water based activities.”
Special events can provide once in a lifetime experiences like sailing a tall ship!
TOURISM

Strangford and Lecale is one of eight Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in Northern Ireland. It is one of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board’s Tourism Destinations and includes the St Patrick Signature Theme. The new Mourne Coastal Route drive runs through the area and it also features the Lecale Way and the Ulster Way walking routes.

This area has an abundance of major, high quality visitor attractions, with three National Trust estate houses and parks, country parks at Scrabo and Delamont, Northern Ireland’s Exploris aquarium, the Wetlands Centre at Castle Espie, three exceptional monastic sites at Inch, Nendrum and Greyabbey, and many tower houses, megaliths, churches and raths.

It touches a number of the growth pillars identified by the NITB namely: Living Legends; Coasts and Lakes; Unique Outdoor; and Naturally NI.
While the area is not known for long distance off road walking, it has many shorter off road walks with heritage features along the way which add interest and variety. There are also many quiet country roads to explore.

This area is also well used by cycling clubs and event organisers.

Water based outdoor recreation has the potential to grow substantially – paddling is one of the fastest growing pursuits in the UK and Ireland.

Outdoor recreation companies report that most people view these activities as the means to appreciate the heritage – not an end in itself.

Wildlife watching and nature pursuits have been identified as under developed activities in the area, given its international environmental importance.

Because of all of the above, Strangford Lough is considered to be a 365 day destination for visitors.

The main issues identified in growing the tourism industry (in a review commissioned by local councils and the NITB) are the needs for:

- better road infrastructure, stopping points and signage into and around the area
- public realm improvements and addressing dereliction
- better awareness of the area regionally, nationally and internationally
- more opportunities and events to allow people to experience and enjoy the natural and built heritage
- improved collaboration amongst business and stakeholders

High quality local food is a great attraction that could be further developed and marketed

Mourne Coastal Route Sign

Staff in Tourist Information Centres and visitor attractions play a vital role in welcoming and informing visitors
Underpinning all of this is the need to conserve the landscape and the wider heritage that visitors come to enjoy. The NITB 2011 visitor satisfaction survey indicates that the Strangford Lough Destination appeals to families and individuals who wish to spend time somewhere offering beautiful scenery and to get close to nature and the natural environment.

**Tourism goal:**
Establish and promote Strangford Lough, Ards and Lecale as the “Strangford Lough” destination based on its high quality natural and built heritage and year round activities to increase visitors and visitor spend in the area, create jobs and boost the local economy without damaging the heritage upon which tourism depends. See Tourism Destination Action Plan Appendix 2.

“Wildlife watching and nature pursuits have been identified as under developed activities in the area, given its international environmental importance.”
Lecale farmland
These include:

- Maintaining hedgerows and field patterns
- Grazing by sheep or cattle
- Allowing Brent geese to graze agricultural land when eelgrass is in short supply
- Reducing shore poaching by livestock
- Woodland management
- Retaining barns used by bats and owls
- Maintaining high water quality in streams
- and much more

European legislation and the Common Agricultural Policy determine the future of farming to a large extent. The latest reforms promote a broader, more holistic approach to landscape management across clusters of farms.
Some farmers retain wetlands in interdrumlin hollows for wildlife (Lecale)

View from the Ards Peninsula towards Scrabo

Bringing in the harvest on the Ards peninsula

Tillage farming
There are pressures for more intensive food production but it is hoped that biodiversity, wetland and rough grazing habitat, and the crisscross pattern of hedges and field boundaries overlaid on the drumlins, which are such a strong feature of the landscape, can be maintained.

There will be opportunities to raise agri-environment scheme issues within the review of the Rural Development Programme 2016-2020. 1,600 farmers participated in the former round of agri-environment schemes.

New opportunities are emerging for artisan food production and some farms are finding niche markets with local food outlets and restaurants. Some farms have also diversified into accommodation, garden centre and activity provision.

There is also scope to support and highlight the work of many farmers and landowners to conserve and promote our heritage, from hedgerow and wetland habitats to traditional gate posts and windmills.
Pot fishing Strangford Lough
Shellfish are the main catch. Inshore and coastal fishing includes trawling and dredging in the Irish Sea, pot fishing for crabs (edible, shore and velvet swimming), lobsters and buckie whelks, and pot fishing for Nephrops (Dublin Bay Prawns) in Strangford Lough. There is a related fish processing industry.

The total County Down inshore fishery (including Kilkeel and Annalong) is worth about £5m per annum and relates to 1-2 man operations using small nets and pots within a few miles of the coast. (Ref: South Eastern Area Fisheries Local Action Group Strategy 2013).

Reduced fish stocks, fish quotas, over fishing, the need to conserve stocks, an aging fleet, reliance on migrant workers and recent fishery restrictions in Strangford Lough are all putting traditional fishing under stress.

Coastal communities are struggling to cope with changes in the fishing industry. There may be opportunities within inshore fisheries management to promote the maritime heritage and develop or adapt skills and equipment for use in offshore renewables.

The European Fisheries Fund (EFF) Axis 4 aims to promote economic diversification and build capacity of fisheries communities across the European Union.

The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) consulted on their draft Sustainable Development Strategy for Northern Ireland’s Inshore Fisheries in 2013.

This document deals only with fishing heritage and the relationship of fishing to the wider heritage.

There is a need to develop a vision for the pot fishery within the Strangford Lough European Marine Site. There may be opportunities to assist the industry through pilot schemes to brand and market local quality produce.

A substantial amount of the NI fishing industry is concentrated in and around the AONB, with fishing ports at Ardglass and Portavogie and a pot fishery in Strangford Lough and around the coasts.
Within the Lough restrictions have been introduced to allow the recovery of horse mussel (*M. modiolus*) communities on the seabed.

The Department for Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) has committed to a pot fishery management plan which fishermen initially developed to allow the Strangford Lough pot fishery to thrive while conserving its environmental and scientific interests. The Plan is expected to introduce permits to a limited number of boats, set a limit on catch effort, introduce new size restrictions and provide a means of assessing catch and environmental sustainability.

Shellfish have traditionally also been harvested from the shore. Economically viable beds of the native oyster were worked out in the 19th century and winkles are the main species collected commercially now. Cockles are hand raked and common mussels are collected on a small scale.

In 2013, the Partnership’s Advisory Committee commissioned a report on the need and potential for a regulated winkle fishery and the recommendations from the Committee along with DARD’s Review of Inshore Fishing will inform the review of the Action Plan in 2014.

**Mariculture**

Farming in the sea – mariculture – has not developed in this area to a great extent although, about a decade ago, 350 hectares of seabed and intertidal area within Strangford Lough were subject to shellfish culture licences issued by DARD. Some small-scale commercial farming of native and Pacific oysters and blue mussels continues in both Strangford and Dundrum Inner Bay. However there are no mariculture objectives within this strategy at this time.
Seaweed Harvesting

Historically in this area, seaweeds have been both harvested and cultured.

Drift wrack and kelp (brown seaweeds) were used on the land as fertiliser.

Up to the Second World War seaweed, in particular knotted wrack, was extensively cut for fertiliser and for burning to produce a powder used in glass making.

Kelp grids can be seen on some shores, for example around Greyabbey - large boulders were placed on sandy areas of shore for seaweeds to attach and create a crop of material.

Some seaweed is still harvested in this area mainly as a “sea vegetable”. The red algae, dulse (*Palmaria palmata*), is cut from the stipes of kelp on which it grows and then dried for human consumption.

Seaweeds are also potential sources of energy (see page 55)

At this stage there are no specific recommendations with respect to the development or control of commercial “wild” seaweed exploitation.

Food Production and Heritage Goal:

To support farmers and fishermen in celebrating their heritage and traditions, maintaining traditional practices in conserving landscape and biodiversity and developing new initiatives relevant to food, heritage and tourism.
SeaGen – the world’s first commercial marine current turbine in the Strangford Narrows has set the area on the world renewable energy stage.
The economic climate over the past few years has reduced the rate of development around the coast and in settlements. There have, however, been some changes, including an increase in holiday self-catering properties available. Planning approval has been given for a re-enactment Viking Village at Delamont Country Park and for whiskey distilleries at Portaferry and Rubane.

There has been a sharp rise in applications for single “microgenerator” wind turbines.

There are proposals to harness the high and consistent winds off Lecale for commercial electricity generation by the First Flight Consortium. Consideration of the proposals include minimising adverse effects on the area’s heritage and fishing interests and maximising local benefit in terms of infrastructure improvements, employment and revenue.

Controlling flooding and managing coastal erosion are major issues. Shoreline development may exacerbate coastal erosion and may also create demand for further sea defences, causeways and boat slips which in turn modify current, tidal flow and habitat.

Rising sea levels and changing weather patterns are resulting in regular repairs and maintenance of sea walls and roads with associated costs and disruption. Rock armouring is the favoured method for road protection against erosion as it helps to dissipate wave energy with less drawdown of sediment. There is however the potential to rock armour the entire coast with loss of amenity, habitat, exacerbated erosion elsewhere and substantial ongoing costs.

It is important that all authorities involved in planning consider coastal processes, cumulative and long term impacts when considering coastal applications. This has led to a call for a better understanding of coastal processes in the area.
Traditional rights to remove sand, gravel and shingle from the shores are attached to the folios of some land holdings in the area. These materials were formerly extracted by shovel and horse drawn cart for use on the land. Nowadays, tractors, trailers and earth-moving machinery are more likely to be used and their impacts can be far greater.

This area provides a natural laboratory for carrying out internationally important marine biological and oceanographic research and this is evident from the number and diversity of research projects that it supports. Such work requires related permissions.

The energy of the strong tidal currents of the Narrows is being harnessed for experimental tidal energy technology development (SeaGen and Minesto). This is particularly apt as the world’s oldest known tide mill was built in AD 619 for the monastery at Nendrum on the northwest shore of Strangford Lough.

This unique story and its worldwide significance draw international interest to the area which can benefit the local economy. The work also employs researchers and technical support that bring revenue into the area.
Kelp seaweeds are being grown on an 8 ha underwater site as part of research into their potential as biofuels as part of the EnAlgae programme managed by Queen's University Belfast (QUB). This programme highlights the area’s high quality environment and its role in Research & Development. The Department of the Environment Marine Division will liaise with QUB with regard to any environmental concerns and in particular with regard to ensuring that non-native species are not inadvertently introduced.

Landscape Planning and Management Goal:
To protect the landscape and associated features upon which economic and social well-being depend, promote good practice and facilitate environmentally sustainable development.

“This area provides a natural laboratory for carrying out internationally important marine biological and oceanographic research.”
3. Policy and Context
The geographic area covered by the Strangford and Lecale AONB and seabed incorporates a number of environmental designated areas, which along with AONB status provide legislative and policy protection measures for the area’s heritage. Most recently Strangford Lough has been designated a Marine Conservation Zone.

Two new district councils are set to come into effect here by 2015. This Strategy will facilitate the integration of work across the boundaries of these jurisdictions. The new councils will have greater powers and responsibilities including planning, community planning and governance, biodiversity, waste management and economic development, especially tourism and outdoor recreation.

The Department of the Environment (DOE) is the lead authority with responsibility for conserving our heritage and advising all other authorities on their related responsibilities under national and EU legislation. (Appendix 3: EU Marine Site and Appendix 5: Strategic Context). A strategic objective of the DOE is to “create prosperity and well-being through environment and heritage excellence.”

The Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership was established under a Partnership Agreement between DOE, Ards Borough Council and Down District Council (Appendix 6: SLLP Agreement) to achieve a shared vision for the heritage taking into account statutory responsibilities, corporate policies and the opportunity for authorities and others to address issues through improved collaboration and understanding. It comprises a Management Group, an Advisory Committee of stakeholders and a Public Forum.

The SLLP Management Group of authorities has DOE, Ards Borough Council and Down District Council at its core, but involves the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) Fisheries, DARD Rural Development, Department of Regional Development (DRD), Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) and others. The Tourism Destination Management Group meets concurrently.

The Management Group is informed by its Advisory Committee of stakeholders and also by the Tourism Forum which is facilitated by local council tourism officers, the Outdoor Recreation Forum facilitated by the SLLP Office, the River Basin Catchment Group facilitated by DOE and the Fisheries Local Action Group facilitated by Down District Council.

Wardening is an important aspect of conservation management and includes day to day site management and monitoring, communication with the public and landowners, and collection of evidence where enforcement of regulations is deemed necessary.

The main players in wardening the area are the DOE, DARD, and the National Trust. The activities of the DOE centre around the management of nature reserves, Scrabo Country Park and a suite of historic monuments in State Care, monitoring designated features, the Modiolus Restoration Programme and programmes for ASSI monitoring and control of invasive species such as Spartina and carpet sea squirt (Didemnum vexillum). The DOE has appointed a Ranger specific to Strangford Lough who is based in the SLLP Office primarily to help implement the Strangford Lough Modiolus Biogenic Reef Revised Restoration Plan but also to play a
wider role in the Lough’s management working closely with staff from the Partnership and stakeholders.

The National Trust has a number of estates and farms in the area and operates its Strangford Lough Wildlife Scheme, which amongst other things manages wildfowling across the extensive areas of shore, foreshore and islands in its care. It currently co-ordinates the Red Squirrel Action group.

DARD regulates all inshore fishing in Northern Ireland and has recently appointed a Fisheries Officer specific to Strangford Lough.

Local councils are involved in aspects of wardening across a range of functions primarily related to environmental health and their staff also work on biodiversity and access initiatives which can assist wardens.

There is strong support for strengthening the system of wardening/rangering in the area to provide a better interface with the public and the Partnership will be seeking ways to achieve this.

The Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership Advisory Committee has representatives from 20 different organisations and interest groups operating in the area. Members bring their wide ranging expertise and local knowledge to bear in identifying and examining local issues through the main Committee, Working Groups and commissioned work. They have a key role to play in communicating the shared vision and encouraging local and wider stakeholder support for the Strategy and Action Plan. They will also review progress on the Action Plan on behalf of stakeholders.

The SLLP Office facilitates the operation of every aspect of the Partnership from undertaking consultation and developing strategy to communication and wardening projects. It provides a key interface with local people and visitors.

Advisory Committee Member Organisations

- Ards Borough Council
- Association of Strangford Lough Yacht Clubs
- Centre for Maritime Archaeology
- Down District Council
- East Down Rural Community Network - (Community & Regeneration)
- Historic Monuments Council
- Joint Council of Wildfowlers
- Northern Ireland Marine Task Force
- National Trust
- NI Federation of Sub-Aqua Clubs
- Northern Ireland Agricultural Producers Association
- Northern Ireland Environment Link
- Northern Ireland Fish Producers Association
- Queen’s University Belfast
- Royal Yachting Association
- Sports Council for Northern Ireland
- Strangford Lough Fishermen’s Association
- Strangford Lough Tourism Destination Management Forum
- Ulster Farmers Union
- Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust
The Partnership is striving to maximise public engagement in heritage management through its Advisory Committee and an Annual Forum which took the form of the People and Place Roadshow in 2012/13.

Specific sector meetings and workshops were held with Advisory Committee members during 2011 and 2012 to identify what they perceive to be the main issues and areas for action.

People throughout the area were invited to comment on the emerging issues and provide their comments in response to fliers and 20,000 magazine style supplements distributed through the Down Recorder, the Ards Chronicle and Spectator, local attractions, food outlets and libraries in February 2012.

Over 2,000 people attended the People and Place Roadshow that toured Portaferry, Downpatrick, Newtownards and Killyleagh in February 2012. They viewed heritage displays, picked up information packs, discussed issues with Partnership representatives and filled in questionnaires on what matters most to them. Advisory Committee members, MLAs and key people in heritage management attended a presentation at Stormont in April 2012 on the emerging issues and further comments were gathered.

Workshops were held in November 2012 and March 2013 with senior staff from statutory authorities and Advisory Committee members to develop the related action plan and advise on priorities.

The work involved a review of each organisation’s strategies and work programmes to identify shared objectives, integrate work and address the overarching priorities.

One to one meetings were held with a number of authorities and liaison is on-going with these and the other statutory bodies involved.

Consultation was also undertaken through the Fisheries Local Action Group, the Tourism Forum, a precursor of the Outdoor Recreation Forum and the River Basin Catchment Planning Stakeholder Group and their recommendations also inform this strategy.

Related papers are available for download on www.strangfordlough.org

There was considerable overlap in the feedback gathered from the sectoral interests and the wider public. The public placed great emphasis on addressing dereliction, protection of the built heritage, planning issues, provision of hotel accommodation and improvements to public transport.

Stakeholder workshops helped to identify priorities and integrate work
In developing this Strategy and Action Plan the Partnership has taken account of the many policies, strategies and plans that relate to aspects of heritage management with a view to both integrating and influencing them in the future.

The Partnership has also taken account of key environmental and heritage legislation and designations.

A description of these and how this strategy relates to them can be found in Appendix 5: Strategic Context.

### RELEVANT POLICIES, STRATEGIES, PLANS, LEGISLATION AND DESIGNATIONS

In developing this Strategy and Action Plan the Partnership has taken account of the many policies, strategies and plans that relate to aspects of heritage management with a view to both integrating and influencing them in the future.

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Policy, legislation and designations

- Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (NCALO)
- Environment (Northern Ireland) Order 2002
- The Conservation (Natural Habitats, & c.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (Habitats Regulations)
- EU Landscape Convention
- The Offshore Marine Conservation (Natural Habitats, & c.) Regulations 2007 (as amended)
- The Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985
- The Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (WANE Act)
- Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013
- Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009
- Duty for Sustainable Development
- Strangford Lough Byelaws
- Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects (Northern Ireland) Order 1995
- Access to the Countryside (NI) Order 1983
- General Planning Measures including-
  - PPS 2: Planning and Nature Conservation
  - PPS 3: Access, Movement and Parking
  - PPS 4: Planning and Economic Development
  - PPS 6: Planning, Archaeology and The Built Heritage
  - PPS 6 (Addendum): Areas of Townscape Character
  - PPS 8: Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation
  - PPS 12: Housing in Settlements
- PPS 9: The Enforcement of Planning Control
- PPS 11: Planning and Waste Management
- PPS 13: Transportation and Land Use
- PPS 15: Planning and Flood Risk
- PPS 16: Tourism
- PPS 18: Renewable Energy
- PPS 21: Sustainable Development in the Countryside

- Water Quality Measures
- Fisheries Act (NI) 1966
- Shellfish Water Directive
- Bivalve Mollusc Production Areas
- Section 75 Northern Ireland Act and Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006

The Strategy and Action Plan has been well-considered by multiple stake-holders. Nothing it contains should discriminate against any Section 75 Group and, where possible, such Groups should be advantaged by it.
Over 2,000 people attended the People and Place Roadshow
Aims and Objectives
AIMS

Providing local people with health and wealth benefits from their heritage, conserving and communicating the heritage, involving local people and recognising their existing and potential role in heritage management, developing outdoor recreation and facilitating visitors are all intrinsically interlinked.
AIM 1: To conserve and engage people with the built and natural heritage.

AIM 2: To use heritage to promote the health and well-being of local people and visitors.

AIM 3: To promote sustainable prosperity and facilitate research and development through the environmentally sustainable use of the heritage.
Conservation of the built and natural heritage will be achieved through:

• Working with local people, encouraging and building on their achievements to conserve the heritage to date
• Facilitating local people to help identify and address heritage needs, making best use of their skills and knowledge and providing information and training as required e.g. developing local heritage volunteers
• A programme of heritage research, monitoring, maintenance, restoration, improvements within which monitoring and reporting relevant to the European Marine Site Conservation Features is a priority
• Developing and implementing policy, legislation and regulations relevant to designations, protected species and habitats, listed buildings, scheduled sites with local input
• Encouraging compliance and enforcing legislation as required
• River basin catchment management
• Having a robust and efficient system to assess plans and proposals in relation to heritage
• Developing and promoting guidance and good practice for activities and developments in environmentally sensitive areas
• A programme of communication and education on the value and importance of the area’s heritage and providing objective factual information on complex issues etc.
  - promote understanding of management issues to staff involved in managing the heritage
  - develop material appropriate for different sectors and for particular purposes
  - communicate with local people and other stakeholders
  - communicate with key opinion formers and decision makers
  - support management initiatives by providing on-site information at key access points

• Undertaking built heritage conservation and improvements
AIM 2: TO USE HERITAGE TO PROMOTE THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF LOCAL PEOPLE AND VISITORS

Research carried out at Exeter University indicates that there is a positive correlation between people's health and their residential proximity to and involvement with the coast and sea. This is also the finding of many studies from the USA linking a sense of well-being and even improvements to children's concentration and ability to learn after exposure to nature and the outdoor environment.

The County Down Rural Community Network wishes to see job creation, health and well-being prioritised within this strategy. They have asked that the Partnership helps local people to make the most of the health benefits of their wonderful natural environment. Local community plans will also inform this aim.

The heritage will be used to promote health and well-being through:

- Driving and facilitating initiatives that involve local people in active and passive enjoyment of the natural environment and outdoor recreation.
- Driving and facilitating initiatives to develop local people's sense of place, cultural traditions and maritime heritage
- Developing a sense of civic pride and responsibility for the environment and heritage through education, communication and activities
- Involving local people in heritage skills and knowledge transfer
- Developing volunteering and guiding opportunities
**AIM 3: TO PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE PROSPERITY AND FACILITATE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE USE OF THE HERITAGE**

Sustainable prosperity will be promoted and R&D will be facilitated through the environmentally sustainable use of the heritage by:

- Driving and facilitating environmentally sustainable initiatives that lead to economic development, job creation and retention, inward investment and visitor spend particularly in relation to:
  - Tourism
  - Outdoor recreation
  - Agriculture and heritage
  - Fishing and heritage
  - Artisan food production and marketing
  - Renewable energy and heritage
  - The creative industries

- Understanding the interaction between human activities and the environment to develop protocols for best use of the area.

- Liaising with sectoral interests and working with them if introducing environmental legislation, regulations and management measures

- Raising the profile of the area as a quality environment in which to live, work and conduct research
OBJECTIVES

The Objectives cut across the three Aims of the Strategy and appear in no particular order of importance.

The Actions mentioned here are intended only to give a flavour of what has already been achieved and what is forthcoming.

The full Action Plan may be downloaded on www.strangfordlough.org

1. Improve access to our natural and built heritage in a way that is sustainable and involves local people as landowners, as users and as a source of knowledge and expertise.

An Outdoor Recreation Forum was established in 2013.

Work has begun on a water-based recreation user handbook with maps, species spotting information and guidelines on sustainable use.

A report has been commissioned by Sport NI working with the DOE, National Trust and SLFP on the effects of water based recreation on overwintering birds at key sites at the north end of Strangford Lough.

NIEA has improved safety and introduced “living history” re-enactments to Inch Abbey and other properties - this work will continue with local communities getting more closely involved with the interpretation and use of historic buildings such as tower houses.

A “Man at Arms” brings a tower house to life
2. Rationalise and develop heritage communication for visitors and local people including on site information.

Local councils are working together to develop interpretation along the Mourne Coastal Route and St Patrick’s Trail.

The SLLPO will distribute a range of new publications in 2014 from “Out and About” guides to “Geology and Landscape”.

Building a network of local volunteer guides and also providing training and skills to establish professional guides is a priority.

3. Develop a programme of heritage activities that engage local people, including volunteering, conservation, outdoor recreation and heritage events which will help to improve health, well-being, wealth and social cohesion.

The Coastal Guardians programme involves people in monitoring and managing their own stretch of coast. People develop skills and meet others in their community in the process. The 2014 programme will be packed with walks, talks, workshops and training.

Local communities will be at the centre of building coastal rowing boats for community leisure and sporting events and the first Down Coastal Rowing Club will be established.

The newly established Strangford Lough Maritime Festival provides a platform for local people to share their passion for their heritage - from shore explorations to Viking re-enactments. It attracted 6,000 people in 2013 and local feedback was very positive.

4. Use maritime and other heritage initiatives to help regenerate communities including fishing communities.

The South East Area European Fisheries Fund (SEA) has been allocated a budget of £2.6m from the European Union and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development to deliver an effective programme towards the fishing dependent villages of Ardglass, Kilkeel (taking in Annalong) and Portavogie. This will include work to develop skills and activities relevant to the fishing heritage and coastal environment.

Work has commenced to produce a leaflet on the heritage of fishing in the area and work is ongoing with fishermen to bring their heritage and knowledge to the wider community.
5. Develop and promote agri-environment schemes to protect and improve landscape, water quality, biodiversity and adaptation to climate change.

DARD will develop and deliver schemes under the new 2014-2020 Rural Development Programme.

Effort will also go into raising awareness of initiatives undertaken by many farmers to conserve our countryside.

6. Establish the area as a hub for outdoor recreation and sport, especially wildlife watching, paddling, sailing, diving, walking and cycling in a quality environment, for local people and for visitors.

Working with local clubs and business SportNI and the SLLPO will use websites and new social media outlets to develop and promote a summer programme of sailing, rowing and paddling activities for local people and visitors.

Down District Council is working to develop looped walks in Lecale and Ards Borough Council is developing a coastal walk at Cloughey linked to the Mourne Coastal Route.

7. Develop major strategic tourism initiatives with high level central co-ordination, especially in relation to transport and signage, to increase the number of visitors to the area and related spend in line with the Strangford Lough Tourism Destination Strategy.

Local councils are keen to improve road links, public transport, direction signage and develop stopping points and to see improvements to the ferry service to allow tourism to grow.

Another priority is to develop the system of visitor feedback and industry analysis.

8. Raise awareness of Strangford Lough as a special destination and generate more visits and spending, particularly in the spring and autumn through reactive and innovative marketing, partnerships and building on the brand work to date.

Local councils will lead in implementing the Tourism Destination Plan. Just some of the initiatives are a PR campaign, the production of a high definition film of the area and further development of the visitstrangfordlough.org website.

There will be a renewed emphasis on authentic heritage experiences and on strategic events that attract visitors, build community pride, attract investment and provide economic return.
9. Engage with business and stakeholders to unify and grow business capacity and to continue to drive up the quality of the visitor experience by providing a consistent standard of facilities, services and welcome that meets the needs of all visitors, and create quality, consistency, professionalism, innovation and influence.

A Strangford Welcome to Tourism Excellence Programme is being developed by local councils to support tourism businesses and collaboration between operators will be encouraged.

10. Raise the profile and awareness of our built heritage and archaeology among decision makers, local people, schools and potential visitors (including expert and specialist interest groups), providing new heritage experiences for local people and increase visits sustainably to top sites of archaeological interest.

The SLLP recommended that schemes to improve vernacular buildings and farm architecture under agri-environment schemes be included in the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020.

The SLLPO will be working with local people to restore 10 traditional farm gateposts and gateways in 2014.

NIEA has a programme to survey and conserve our state-owned built heritage. Work has already begun to make tower houses and monastic sites vibrant centres as local heritage hubs. Sites with international standing such as Grey Abbey, Nendrum and Inch Abbey will be more widely promoted.

11. Reduce dereliction, dumping and litter in settlements.

Some communities have already tackled the problem of dereliction and their success and other case studies will be shared to encourage further initiatives.

There will be at least two co-ordinated shore clean-ups throughout the area each year as part of a community engagement and civic pride drive.

Marine Litter has to be tackled at Regional level and the DOE is finalising the Marine Litter Strategy.
12. Introduce an integrated system of reporting and communication on biodiversity.

DOE Marine Division has already appointed the first Strangford Lough Ranger and DARD has appointed a Strangford Lough Fisheries Officer and the SLLPO will help to develop an integrated ranger system.

Communities will have more opportunities to get involved with monitoring and caring for their stretch of coast through the Coastal Guardians initiative.

The SLLP Advisory Committee has developed recommendations for managing shore based shellfish collection and will pursue these as a priority.

Local councils will implement Biodiversity Action Plans.

13. Implement a robust and practical system of wildlife and habitat protection.

Strangford Lough became a Marine Conservation Zone in 2013. The DOE and DARD introduced a closed area in Strangford Lough for activities that might affect the seabed of Strangford Lough where *Modiolus moliolus* communities are being restored – these apply particularly to fishing and aspects of water based recreation.

14. Restore and improve key habitats and features.

The DOE Marine Division and the NIEA working in particular with the National Trust and DARD will undertake a range of work to include delivering the Modiolus Restoration Plan, working to protect the red squirrel and controlling marine and freshwater invasive species.

The SLLPO will develop proposals for river enhancement schemes working with anglers and local communities.

Work will continue to deliver River Basin Catchment plans.
15. Assess the current state of the County Down coast, identify the issues and address them.

During this period local councils will take on greater responsibilities for Planning and the Partnership will work to ensure that councillors and other key decision makers are aware of the broad value of the AONB landscape to the economy, to communities in terms of a quality environment, health and sense of place, and to biodiversity.

The Department of the Environment intends to scope out the need for a Shoreline Management Strategy for Northern Ireland. It will also develop and implement objectives and actions specific to the European Marine site.

16. Maximise local benefits from the development of renewable energy technology and ensure that it does not impact negatively on the landscape and biodiversity.

The Department of the Environment working with local councils and the Department of Trade and Industry will produce a Marine Renewable Guidance document. It will be important that both off shore and onshore work proposals are assessed against clear criteria. Local councils will play a lead role in ensuring that any associated new power lines go underground and that improvements are made to the grid supply.

17. Implement the system for integrated management of the area’s heritage

The Action Plan will be reviewed and updated annually and work will begin on the 2018-2023 Strategy in 2016.
GET INVOLVED IN CARING FOR OUR HERITAGE

The Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership offer volunteering opportunities in many different aspects of heritage management and conservation and also provide general information on many different aspects of the area’s heritage. For example:

Coastal Guardians is a scheme to help people to monitor and care for their stretch of coast. People get involved to learn new skills, get out and about, share their knowledge, find out more and just to have fun.

The Strangford Lough Maritime Festival depends on volunteers for a whole host of activities from giving talks or displaying photographs to distributing fliers and stewarding.

Shore clean-ups – getting out on a clean-up is great exercise and you learn a lot about the shore – individuals, groups and schools are welcome to get involved.

Send us your photos for use on You Tube, website, Facebook

Spread the word with our Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership media app – send postcards of our fabulous heritage to your friends and add your pictures to the App. We would also be delighted to receive your stories and recordings.

Tel: 028 427 29005
E: mail: info @strangfordlough.org
www.strangfordlough.org

The National Trust provides volunteering opportunities in practical nature conservation on their estates, farms and stretches of shore, and also within their stately homes.

Believe it or not the thousands of overwintering birds and terns are counted and monitored regularly, mostly by volunteers. There are opportunities to get involved if you are prepared to undertake bird identification training.

Seal pups may be left for long periods of time on their own on the shore while their parents are out fishing. If you find a pup that you think is injured or sick do not approach it (they bite) then please call the Exploris Aquarium in Portaferry.
Tel: 028 427 28062

Stranded or dead marine mammals ie seals, whales, dolphins, porpoises, and also sharks or turtles - NIEA Regional Operations:
Tel: 028 4461 5520

To record sightings of whales, dolphins, turtles or sharks
http://www.iwdg.ie

The Ulster Museum’s Centre for Environment Data and Recording is pleased to receive records of wildlife to add to their Northern Ireland database www.nmni.com/cedar

Divers can get involved with Seasearch: www.seasearch.org.uk/northernireland

The Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust at Castle Espie also provides volunteering opportunities. Tel: 028 9187 4146

The DOE is responsible for dealing with environmentally damaging and illegal operations.

If you are concerned for example about:
- Unauthorised vehicles on the shore
- Large scale removal of animals or seaweed
- Unlicensed / unpermitted construction
- Unlicensed waste disposal
- Disturbance to wildlife
- Mooring, anchoring / diving in the Strangford Lough restricted zone

then contact the DOE Marine Division Ranger at Strangford.LoughRanger@doeni.gov.uk or Tel: 028 904 16768


DoE Pollution Hotline (inland or at sea)
Tel: 0800 80 70 60
Queries with regard to fishing in Strangford Lough should be addressed to the Strangford Lough Fisheries Officer Tel: 07554 997663
or e-mail: dardops@dardni.gov.uk

Salmon/trout netting/unlicensed angling DCAL Fisheries 24 hotline 028 71 342100

This code ensures that as you enjoy this great place, you’re helping us care for it and minimising our impact on the wildlife that lives here. It also makes sure that you keep on the right side of the law!

STRANGFORD LOUGH AND LECALE CARE CODE

Safety First!
There are areas of soft mud and other places with very strong and rapidly rising tides. At high tide Ballyhenry Island and Horse Island are cut off from the shore – therefore know what the tides are doing and get a weather forecast before you head out.

• Enjoy picnics, ice-creams and open air snacks – but please take all litter home or put it in the bins provided.

• Explore the area but please keep to paths and trails and tread carefully! Birds are often found nesting on the shore and in ground vegetation.

• Photos and sketches are a great way to store memories. Leave plants and animals where they live.

• Seals are brilliant to watch – but they are sensitive to disturbance and are protected by law. Watch them through binoculars and keep your distance (200m is a good rule of thumb) whether in a boat or on the shore. Don’t approach seals or their pups.
• Over wintering shore birds (between October and March) need to conserve energy and feed as much as they can at low tide. Take care not to disturb them when walking, riding a horse or exercising your dog.

• Wildlife perceive dogs as predators and they can cause significant disturbance. Keep them on a lead and always remove any faeces. Scoop the poop!

• Rock pools are fantastic for finding all sorts of creatures but be very gentle when turning over rocks. Always put them back carefully and try not to handle the animals.

• Some islands are open for exploration and even camping but others are private or protected as bird sanctuaries. Check before you land!

• The shore is for wildlife and pedestrians – please do not take any vehicles on the shore.

• There is a restricted zone in Strangford Lough where diving, mooring or anchoring is prohibited.

• The wash from boats can be damaging and may affect other people on the water – keep your boat speed low and obey any speed restrictions.

• Fires can cause lasting impacts and be devastating to natural habitats. Please don’t light fires unless they are permitted and then use established fire rings, barbecues or create a mound fire. When camping use a lightweight stove for cooking.

• There is good angling in the area – think sustainability and only take what you need for your supper! Adopt a catch and release policy and obey any restrictions.

• Respect property and other people.

• Close gates behind you where appropriate.

Find out about and follow the principles of Leave No Trace www.leavenotraceireland.org
5. GLOSSARY

### General Abbreviations

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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LBAP</td>
<td>Local Biodiversity Action Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGOs</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisations</td>
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<tr>
<td>NI</td>
<td>Northern Ireland</td>
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<tr>
<td>R&amp;D</td>
<td>Research &amp; Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>ROI</td>
<td>Republic of Ireland</td>
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<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<tr>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Planning Policy Statement</td>
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### Designations

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AONB</td>
<td>Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty</td>
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<td>ASSI</td>
<td>Area of Special Scientific Interest</td>
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<td>EMS</td>
<td>European Marine Site</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESA</td>
<td>Environmentally Sensitive Area</td>
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<td>MCZ</td>
<td>Marine Conservation Zone</td>
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<tr>
<td>N2K</td>
<td>Natura 2000 Network of European Sites</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAC</td>
<td>Special Area of Conservation</td>
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<td>SPA</td>
<td>Special Protection Area</td>
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### Agencies and other Bodies

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<tr>
<td>ABC</td>
<td>Ards Borough Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAP</td>
<td>Common Agriculture Policy</td>
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<td>DARD</td>
<td>Department of Agriculture and Rural Development</td>
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<td>DDC</td>
<td>Down District Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>DETI</td>
<td>Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment</td>
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<td>DOE</td>
<td>Department of the Environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>DRD</td>
<td>Department for Regional Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>EFF</td>
<td>European Fisheries Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>MCA</td>
<td>Maritime &amp; Coastguard Agency</td>
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<td>NIEA</td>
<td>Northern Ireland Environment Agency</td>
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<td>NITB</td>
<td>Northern Ireland Tourist Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>NT</td>
<td>National Trust</td>
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<tr>
<td>OR Forum</td>
<td>Outdoor Recreation Forum</td>
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<tr>
<td>QUB</td>
<td>Queen’s University Belfast</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEA</td>
<td>South East Area (Fisheries Local Action Group)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SLLP</td>
<td>Strangford Lough &amp; Lecale Partnership</td>
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<td>SLLPO</td>
<td>Strangford Lough &amp; Lecale Partnership Office</td>
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6. APPENDICES

The production of this Strategy has involved integrating work across many other Strategies and Plans. Workshops were used to cross reference and identify priorities and actions. The reports from these Workshops and the final Action Plan along with other supporting documents are all available to download from www.strangfordlough.org

Appendix 1: Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measures (extract)  
Appendix 2: Destination Strangford Lough Tourism Plan Action Points  
Appendix 3: European Union (EU) Marine Site  
Appendix 4: Strangford Lough Modiolus Biogenic Reef Revised Restoration Plan Oct 2012  
Appendix 5: Strategic Context  
Appendix 6: Strangford Lough & Lecale Partnership (SLLP) Agreement  
Appendix 7: Strangford Lough and Lecale Action Plan 2013-2018  
Appendix 8: SLLP Workshop Reports  
Appendix 9: Maps of environmental designations and restricted areas


SLLP Contact details:  
Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership, Number 1 The Square, Portaferry, County Down BT22 1LW  
T. 028427 28886 / 29005  
E. info@strangfordlough.org  
W. strangfordlough.org

We are also on Facebook, and YouTube.  
Heritage app available free from the Apple i-Tune store and Google Play. Search for Strangford Lough and Lecale. This is a smart phone application only (though some tablets may be able to download it).
Strangford Lough, Lecale and Outer Ards Ramsar

Strangford Lough, Lecale and Outer Ards Areas of Special Scientific Interest
The SLLP wishes to thank the organisations and individuals who gave their time and expertise to the development of the Strategy and who will be integral to the delivery of the Action Plan.

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This publication features SLLP commissioned photography from Bernie Brown and Chris Heaney and also the beautiful landscape photography of Alain le Garsmeur and Nigel Jamison. Mark Carmody supplied most of the wonderful bird images, some of which feature in Shore Birds of Ireland, Collins Press. Special thanks go to Claire Goodwin for the use of her underwater images.

Front cover images:
People from the area were photographed with the landscape, wildlife, and the built heritage that they are all passionate about. They are from all walks of life - conservation, design, farming, sailing, wildfowling, ferry operation, fishing and an aspiring marine biologist!

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