

# Draft Plan Strategy

## Local Development Plan | 2030

Evidence Paper 19: Coast

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## Executive Summary

- This paper provides an overview of policies relevant to the coastal area of the Borough and has demonstrated the overlapping relationship between terrestrial and marine planning.
- The paper highlights that Councils must have regard to the Marine Policy Statement and Marine Plan for Northern Ireland (once adopted) in the preparation of the community and local development plan.
- The Marine Policy Statement and adopted Marine Plan will be material considerations and developments that could affect the marine area must be in accordance with these documents, unless considerations indicate otherwise.
- It is identified that the entirety of the Borough's coastal area is located within the 'Developed Coast'. The planning approach will be balanced on a precautionary approach with sustainable enhancement and regeneration of the Urban Area, without exacerbating the risks of coastal flooding or erosion.
- It is important that the impact of climate change within the coastal dynamic and adequate provision for change is taken into account.
- This paper recognises the importance of the coast within the Borough for tourism and recreation, along with its intrinsic natural heritage and landscape importance.
- It is important that the LDP continues the enhancement of the Borough's coastal area to further encourage citizen enjoyment of the recreational, economic and social features.

# 1 Introduction

- 1.1 This is one of a series of background papers being presented as part of the evidence base to inform the preparation of the Antrim and Newtownabbey Local Development Plan 2030 (LDP). This paper draws together the evidence base used in relation to the topic of the Coast and should be read in conjunction with other evidence papers relating to Natural Heritage, Loughs and Landscape. The evidence in this paper was collated at a point in time and may be subject to further updates. Evidence papers should be read collectively.
- 1.2 In line with Departmental guidance, the Council has updated its evidence base to inform the next stage of the LDP known as the Plan Strategy. This paper updates the 'Shaping Our Environment' baseline evidence paper, as it relates to Coast, which accompanied the Preferred Options Paper (POP) published in January 2017.
- 1.3 It should be noted that the evidence base collected to inform the draft Plan Strategy also forms the basis for additional assessments and appraisals required as part of the plan preparation process, most notably the Sustainability Appraisal.
- 1.4 Northern Ireland's coastline is one of its most valuable natural assets. The coast is among one of the most variable in the world with a wide diversity of unique landscape quality, geological features and natural environments. From the northern tip of Magilligan Point to Warrenpoint in the south east, there are an array of coastal features including dramatic cliffs, sandy beaches and sand dunes. These create an internationally renowned landscape that has developed to provide a significant tourism industry and provides recreational and leisure opportunities for citizens.
- 1.5 The Northern Ireland coast is also an important economic location through industrial and commercial activities, and habitation of urban areas. Ports and harbours of various sizes, roads and railway lines and housing are among the infrastructure located at the coast. The coast is, and has been, an important environment for the provision of ecosystem services to sustain societal and ecological livelihoods. Critically as society places considerable demands on coastal areas, human interaction is subject to continual change from the dynamic natural processes of the coastal zone.
- 1.6 On initial examination, the Borough does not possess a significant coastline or the tourism related infrastructure when compared with the North Coast. The Borough has a relatively small coast stretching approximately 7.5km, between Whitehouse to where Metropolitan Newtownabbey abuts Greenisland. The character of the area resembles an urban developed coast, with a diversity of mixed-use developments for residential, recreation and tourism. The coastline runs along Belfast Lough, which is a large intertidal sea lough located at the

mouth of the River Lagan. The inner lough is characterised by mudflats, shell dominated banks and artificial lagoons.

- 1.7 Belfast Lough is a biologically diverse and important ecosystem for wintering seabirds and waders. This has been recognised through national and international and conservation designations, important coastal landscape setting and in terms of economic, social and environmental diversity with activities including recreation and tourism.

## **2 Legislative Context**

### **The Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011**

- 2.1 The Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (hereafter referred to as the 2011 Act) is the principal planning legislation in Northern Ireland, which underpins the reformed two-tier planning system that commenced on 1 April 2015. It introduced the plan-led system, where the LDP is the primary consideration for decision making on all new development schemes and proposals will be required to accord with it's provisions unless, exceptionally other material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 2.2 Under the new Planning System introduced in 2015, the LDP will comprise of two documents, a Plan Strategy and a Local Policies Plan that will be prepared in sequence. It also requires the LDP to be subject to a Sustainability Appraisal.

### **The Planning (Local Development Plan) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015**

- 2.3 These Regulations set out the sequence in which the Council's new LDP is to be prepared and provides detail on the content and procedure of each stage in the LDP preparation process and independent examination.

### **The Planning (Statement of Community Involvement) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015**

- 2.4 These Regulations set out the sequence in which the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is to be prepared and provides detail on the content and procedures required. The Council published it's SCI in January 2016 the purpose of which is to define how the Council will engage with the community in the delivery of the LDP. It is set within the context of the Council's Corporate Plan and meets the requirements of the 2011 Act.

### **Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006**

- 2.5 Section 25 of the Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006 requires all Northern Ireland Departments and Councils, in exercising their functions, to act in the way they consider best calculated to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Section 5 of the 2011 Act copper-fastens this duty by requiring those who exercise any function in relation to LDPs to do so with the objective of furthering sustainable development.

**Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014**

- 2.6 The Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 introduced a statutory link between a Council's Community Plan and LDP, and requests that the preparation of the LDP must take account of the Community Plan.

**Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998**

- 2.7 The Council has a statutory duty under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 as a public authority, in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between the nine equality categories of persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation; men and women generally; persons with a disability and persons without; and persons with dependants and persons without.
- 2.8 Council has engaged and will continue to engage with Section 75 groups throughout the LDP process, adhering to the Council's SCI.

**Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016**

- 2.9 The Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 provides a statutory duty on public authorities to have due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans, and when designing and delivering public services and came into effect for Councils in June 2017.
- 2.10 Rural needs is an ongoing and integral component of the Council's LDP.

**The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004**

- 2.11 It is a statutory requirement that all plans and programmes that are likely to have a significant environmental effect must be subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). The European Union Directive '2001/42/EC' states that an SEA is mandatory and was transposed into local legislation in the form of The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004 (the EAPP (NI) Regulations). The objective of the SEA directive is to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the Council's LDP, with the view to promoting sustainable development.
- 2.12 The SEA is an ongoing process and must be carried out in conjunction with, and integrated into the LDP process. Under the provisions of the SEA Directive and the Regulations, an environmental report is published with the LDP document.

**The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995**

- 2.13 The LDP is required to consider its impact on the integrity of Natura 2000 sites (these comprise Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and RAMSAR Sites) and will be subject to a Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA). Similar to the SEA the HRA is an on-going process, which will take place at key

stages during the preparation of the LDP. The Regulations contribute to transposing the requirements of the EC Habitats and Birds Directives.

### **The Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017**

- 2.14 EIA Regulations reinforce the quality of decision-making and improve the current levels of environmental protection. Notably, this legislation identifies sensitive areas listed in Schedule 2, including Areas of Special Scientific Interest, scheduled monuments and European designations relating to environmental or habitat importance.

### **The Environment (Northern Ireland) Order 2002**

- 2.15 This provides the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) with the power to declare areas of land and coast as ASSIs, where the land or coastal area is of special interest for its flora, fauna, geological, physiological or other features that need to be protected.

### **The Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985**

- 2.16 This created a number of offences relating to killing, injuring or removing wild birds or wild animal listed in Schedule 5, and prohibits interference with places used for shelter or protection. Additionally, the Order makes it an offence to uproot or trade in any wild plant listed in Schedule 8. The Order aims to prevent the spread of non-native species (i.e. Japanese Knotweed) which may be detrimental to native wildlife.

### **The Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011**

- 2.17 This amended the 1985 Order by giving greater protection to a wider range of plants, animals and birds. The Act introduced a statutory duty on all public bodies to further the conservation of biodiversity.

### **EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive**

- 2.18 This Directive 2008/56/EC outlines a transparent, legislative framework for an ecosystem-based approach to the management of human activities of the marine area. This approach seeks to support the sustainable use of marine goods and services. The overarching goal of the Directive is to achieve and maintain 'Good Environmental Status'<sup>1</sup> by 2020 across Europe's marine environment. The Directive requires each Member State to develop a Marine Strategy for their waters, in coordination with other countries within the same marine region or sub region.

### **The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009**

- 2.19 This divides the UK waters into marine regions with an inshore and offshore region, under the administration of the four regions of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Each region will have a marine plan authority who are

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<sup>1</sup> Joint Nature Conservation Committee, 2015, EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive.



responsible for marine planning. The Act includes a licensing system for the management of development from the mean spring high water mark out to the 12 nautical mile mark (inshore region).

### **The Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013**

- 2.20 The Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013, along with the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, required the former Department of the Environment (now DAERA), as the Northern Ireland Marine Authority, to prepare and adopt an inshore and offshore region Marine Plan. For administrative purposes, the Marine Plans are combined within one document. The Marine Plan, once adopted will help to manage the Northern Ireland Marine Area and enhance sustainable development.
- 2.21 Additionally the Marine Act sets out the framework for Northern Ireland's seas and the designation of Marine Conservation Zones. The designation can be applied by the Marine Division (DAERA) to conserve species of marine flora, fauna and wildlife, geological and geomorphological features.

## **3 Regional Policy Context**

### **Draft Programme for Government Framework 2016-2021**

- 3.1 The key aim of the draft Programme for Government (PfG) is to grow a sustainable economy through investing in the future, tackling disadvantage, improving health and wellbeing, protecting the people and the environment, building a strong and shared community and delivering high quality services.
- 3.2 The delivery of many of the strategic outcomes will be the responsibility of central government, however, the LDP will play a supporting role in helping to deliver many of these. Particularly relevant are Outcome 2, 'We Live and Work Sustainably, Protecting the Environment' and Outcome 12, 'We Have Created a Place Where People Want to Live and Work, to Visit and Invest'.

### **Sustainable Development Strategy Northern Ireland 2010**

- 3.3 One of the key principles outlined in the Everyone's Involved - Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS) relates to 'Living within Environmental Limits'. This promotes the need to protect and improve our environment with emphasis on the limits of the planet's environment, resources and biodiversity and to ensure that finite resources are protected for future generations. One of the key priority areas relates to 'striking an appropriate balance between the responsible use and protection of natural resources in support of a better quality of life and a better quality environment'. This promotes sustainable land and marine management, better planning and management of development in ways which are sustainable and which contribute to creating a better environment.

- 3.4 Inappropriate development around the shoreline of Belfast Lough has the potential to, negatively affect the loss of and/or damage to habitats and/or species of international, European or national Importance. A development approach that balances the continued growth of the Metropolitan Area but supports and enhances the natural/heritage of the Lough environs would help to protect and enhance this coastal area. Additionally, this can help to support the economy as an enhanced tourism asset.

### **Regional Development Strategy 2035**

- 3.5 The Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS) provides regional guidance to conserve, protect and where possible enhance the natural environment. The RDS recognises that Northern Ireland has a unique natural environment with diverse biodiversity, landscapes and waterways. Specific to the Belfast Metropolitan Area, 'SFG5: Protect and enhance the quality of the setting of the BMUA [Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area] and its environmental assets' sets out to protect areas of high scenic value, Belfast Lough, the hills around the BMUA from development. Additionally, it sets out that the use of green spaces to help manage access to important wildlife sites and minimise the potential for damage due to visitor pressure.
- 3.6 The RDS identifies the need for distinctive landscape character to be conserved, protected and where possible enhanced in areas of landscape quality. The LDP will therefore play its part in supporting the enhancement and protection of sensitive landscapes and natural heritage areas within the Borough.
- 3.7 Regional Guidance (RG) 9- 'Reduce our carbon footprint and reduce our carbon footprint and facilitate mitigation and adaptation to climate change whilst improving air quality'. The aim of this guidance is to minimise development in areas at risk from flooding from rivers, the seas and surface water run-off. This recognises that the protection and extension of ecosystems and habitats that reduce or buffer the effects of climate change can aid adaptation. The RDS suggests that a precautionary approach to development in areas of flood risk should be utilised using the latest flood risk data that is available.
- 3.8 Regional Guidance (RG) 11: 'Conserve, protect and where possible, enhance our built and natural environment'. Within the regional guidance the protection, enhancement and management of the coast is outlined. It indicates that coastal areas need to be protected from coastal squeeze, to safeguard against loss of distinctive habitats and to help adaptation to climate change. The Marine Policy Statement (MPS) 2011 and the Draft Marine Plan will provide spatial guidance and detailed policy where appropriate for the marine, coastal and terrestrial interface and environs. This will be further complemented by work to advance Integrated Coastal Zone Management.

**The UK Marine Policy Statement 2011**

- 3.9 This establishes the Vision for the marine environment of the United Kingdom. This Vision seeks the achievement of 'clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse oceans and seas.' This vision was jointly adopted by all administrations within the United Kingdom.

**The EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020**

- 3.10 This Strategy was published in May 2011 and focuses on six major targets related to loss of biodiversity. It aims to reduce key pressures on nature and ecosystem services in the EU through better implementation of existing nature conservation legislation, anchoring biodiversity objectives into key policies and closing important policy gaps.
- 3.11 Published by DAERA in 2015, the Biodiversity Strategy highlights Northern Ireland's coasts are rich in biodiversity and major contributors to our attractiveness to tourists and residents alike. They are particularly rich for seabirds and intertidal marine life, but coastal development and pollution run-off have had locally serious impacts. Climate change and severe weather have a particularly strong impact on the coast physically and on biodiversity. Regulation of the coastal area is an active area of work with both terrestrial and marine legislation of relevance.

**Regional Transportation Strategy for Northern Ireland 2002-2012**

- 3.12 The Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) for Northern Ireland 2002-2012 identifies strategic transportation investment priorities and considers potential funding sources and affordability of planned initiatives over the strategy period. The RTS is a 'daughter document' of the Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2035, which sets out the spatial development framework for Northern Ireland up to 2035.
- 3.13 This Strategy was supported by three initiatives namely Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan 2004, Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan 2015 and the Sub-Regional Transport Plan 2007.

**Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan 2004**

- 3.14 The Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan (BMTP) 2004 is the local transport plan for the Belfast Metropolitan Area (BMA) including Metropolitan Newtownabbey. This plan delivered a phased and costed implementation programme of transport schemes to 2015. This plan took forward the strategic initiatives of the RTS 2002-2012.

**Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan 2015 (2005)**

- 3.15 The former Department for Regional Development (DRD), now the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) prepared the Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan (RSTN TP) 2015. The Plan is based on the guidance set out in the RDS 2035 and the RTS 2002-2012. The Plan presents a range of multi-modal

transport initiatives to manage, maintain and develop Northern Ireland's Strategic Transport Network. The Regional Strategic Transport Network of Northern Ireland comprises the complete rail network, five Key Transport Corridors (KTCs), four Link Corridors, the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Corridors and the remainder of the trunk road network.

### **Sub-Regional Transport Plan 2007**

- 3.16 The Sub-Regional Transport Plan (SRTP) 2007 covers Antrim and takes forward the strategic initiatives of the Regional Transportation Strategy (RTS) for Northern Ireland 2002-2012. The SRTP deals with the transport needs of the whole of Northern Ireland with the exception of the BMA and the rail and trunk road networks, which are covered, in the BMA and RSTN TP.

### **Ensuring a Sustainable Transport Future – 'A New Approach to Regional Transportation' 2011**

- 3.17 Ensuring a Sustainable Transport Future (ESTF) was developed to build on the RTS for Northern Ireland 2002-2012 and to refocus and rebalance the investment in the future. Unlike the 2002 Strategy, Ensuring a Sustainable Transport Future (ESTF) does not include details of schemes or projects. Rather, the Department has set three High Level Aims for transportation along with twelve supporting Strategic Objectives, covering the economy, society and the environment. The ESTF complements the RDS 2035 and contains high-level aims and strategic objectives to support the growth of the economy, enhance the quality of life for all and reduce the environmental impact of transport. It sets out the approach to regional transportation and is used to guide strategic investment decisions beyond 2015. Work is progressing on the implementation of the ESTF and the Council will ensure that any future transportation projects affecting the Borough are appropriately reflected in the LDP.

### **Forthcoming Transport Plans**

- 3.18 The Department for Infrastructure is currently preparing new Transport Plans which will cover the Borough. This includes a new Regional Strategic Transport Network Plan for all of Northern Ireland and a new Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan which will cover Belfast City Council, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council, Ards and North Down Borough Council and Mid and East Antrim Borough Council as well as Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council. Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council is represented on the Project Boards for both plans along with other Councils.
- 3.19 As part of the preparation for the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan, the Department is preparing a Transport Study for the greater Belfast area and the Council has taken the emerging study into consideration in the preparation of its draft Plan Strategy. Work will also continue to bring forward the next stage of the LDP, the Local Policies Plan, alongside the Department's Transport Plans.

- 3.20 Further information on the Transport Study and Transport Plans is available on the Department of Infrastructure's website <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/>.

### **Sustainable Water – A Long-Term Water Strategy for Northern Ireland 2015-2040**

- 3.21 'Sustainable Water – A Long-Term Water Strategy for Northern Ireland (2015-2040)' sets out a range of initiatives to deliver the Executive's long term goal of a sustainable water sector in Northern Ireland. The Strategy recognises how planning can impact on flood risk and water quality and aims to ensure that existing water and sewerage infrastructure and investment proposals inform future planning decisions and the preparation of LDPs.
- 3.22 The Strategy sets out a number of matters that the Council's new LDP will need to take into account which are summarised below:
- Ensuring planning decisions are informed by up to date information on the risk from all significant sources of flooding;
  - Prevention of inappropriate development in high flood risk areas and ensuring that future development does not increase flood risk;
  - Exceptional development within high flood risk areas must make provision for adequate mitigation measures;
  - Ensure surface water drainage is adequately addressed; and
  - Planning policy should promote sustainable water and sewerage services by making appropriate space for water and sewerage infrastructure including sustainable drainage systems.

### **Strategic Planning Policy Statement**

- 3.23 At the centre of the SPPS are the pillars of sustainable development. The SPPS highlights the importance of coast from an economic, social and environmental perspective from the growth of settlements, its unique scenic quality and strategic economic link to Great Britain and Europe. The SPPS aims to protect the undeveloped coast from inappropriate development and to support the sensitive enhancement and regeneration of the developed coast, largely within coastal settlements. The SPPS defines the developed coast as including existing settlements and major developments such as ports, isolated industrial units and power station.
- 3.24 The Regional Strategic Objectives for coastal development are to:
- Conserve the natural character and landscape of the undeveloped coast and to protect it from excessive, inappropriate or obtrusive development; and
  - Facilitate appropriate development in coastal settlements and other part of the developed coastline (subject to all other relevant planning policies) that contributes to a sustainable economy and which is sensitive to its coastal location.

3.25 The SPPS states that the following strategic policy must be taken into account in the preparation of LDPs and in the determination of planning applications.

- The undeveloped coast will rarely be an appropriate location for new development. Where new development requires a coastal location, it must normally be directed into coastal settlements and other parts of the developed coast;
- Development should only be permitted on the undeveloped coast where the proposal is of such national or regional importance as to outweigh any potential detrimental impact on the coastal environment and where there is no feasible alternative site within an existing urban area in the locality;
- Within the developed coast, areas of amenity value and areas or features designated for their importance to archaeological, built or natural heritage, should be protected from inappropriate development;
- Within the developed coast there will be a presumption in favour of development that promotes the enhancement and regeneration of urban waterfronts;
- In considering development proposals within the developed or undeveloped coast, attention must be paid to the retention of existing public accesses and coastal walkways. Development that would result in the closure of existing access points or the severing of routes will normally only be acceptable where a suitable alternative is provided;
- Proposals to extend access to the coastline or for the provision of associated facilities such as pathways or picnic areas, should not impact adversely on the nature conservation, archaeological / built heritage, geological or landscape value of the area;
- Development will not be permitted in areas of the coast known to be at risk from flooding, coastal erosion or land instability.

3.26 The SPPS reiterates how new LDPs and the forthcoming Marine Plan for Northern Ireland need to be compatible. This is due to the overlapping administrative functions of the intertidal area from terrestrial planning and marine planning/licencing. Additionally, the SPPS highlights how coastal development needs to integrate into the preparation of the new LDP for the Borough and should identify areas within coastal settlements where opportunities exist for new coastal development.

### **Other Planning Policy**

3.27 Current operational planning policy, in relation to aspects of the coast is primarily included within the following:

- Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 2: Natural Heritage;
- PPS 15: Planning and Flood Risk;

- PPS 16: Tourism; and
- A Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland.

3.28 These PPSs, as well as the SPPS, have been taken into consideration in the formulation of the detailed development management policies, which are contained within the draft Plan Strategy document.

### **Departmental Guidance**

3.29 The LDP has been prepared taking account of Departmental policy and guidance, which is available by contacting the Department for Infrastructure.

3.30 The Development Plan Practice Note 7 'The Plan Strategy' published in 2015, guides officers and relevant users through the key requirements for the preparation of the Plan Strategy and deals primarily with procedures as well as good practice.

3.31 DFI Rivers has published guidance on the preparation of LDP policies for flood risk management. The purpose of this guidance is to assist Councils with the drafting of sound operational planning policies to be included within the new LDP. This guidance for the coastal area advises that development will not be permitted within the 1 in 200 year coastal flood plain (AEP of 0.5%), unless the applicant can demonstrate the proposal constitutes an exception. The guidance indicates that if the proposal is an acceptable exception to the policy, the applicant is required to submit a Flood Risk Assessment to help demonstrate that the proposal has identified all flood risk and there are adequate measures to manage and mitigate any increase of flood risk. A development proposal that does not meet the exception criteria, but can be deemed of overriding regional or sub regional economic importance, may be permitted.

3.32 Minor development will be acceptable within the defended or undefended floodplain subject to a satisfactory flood risk assessment. Development in defended brownfield areas will be generally considered acceptable for development. Development proposals which require new hard engineered or earthen banks defences, a flood compensation storage works or land rising will not be acceptable.

3.33 Areas of development proposals that are considered an exception from the above guidance include previously developed land within the developed coast which are protected by flood defences. The exclusions to this exception for defended areas of the coast are the following:

- Essential Infrastructure, such as power supply or emergency services;
- Development for the storage of hazardous substances;
- Bespoke accommodation for vulnerable groups;
- Any development located close to flood defences; and

- Proposals involving significant intensification of use (these will be considered on individual merit and informed by flood risk assessment).
- 3.34 The former Department of the Environment (now DAERA) prepared a document titled 'Towards an Integrated Coastal Zone Management Strategy for Northern Ireland 2006-2026' (ICZM). The ICZM Strategy for Northern Ireland establishes long-term objectives for achieving sustainable coastal planning and management. The strategy aims to make improvements to the coastal zone through enhancing existing management systems, development of new management approaches and identification and mechanism for resolving areas of conflict.
- 3.35 The ICZM approach seeks to identify key factors affecting the coastal zone of Northern Ireland and put in place a series of supported objectives and actions which will promote a coordinated and sustainable approach to future planning and management of the coastal resource. The ICZM Strategy states that historically policies derived for coastal management in Northern Ireland have been principally focuses on individual sectoral or departmental interests (i.e. aquaculture). This Strategy seeks to bolster a holistic approach for coastal management through breaking down these individual silos and facilitate a framework that integrates their interest and responsibilities.
- 3.36 The ICZM Strategy is consistent with the principles of sustainable development and is organised into three priority themes of:
1. Sustainable communities at the coastal zone;
  2. Safeguarding and improving the environment within he coastal zone; and
  3. Maintaining and enhancing the economy of the coastal zone.
- 3.37 This involves a number of specific actions in the environmental, social, and economic spheres with specific goals pertaining to integration. A key component of the implementation of the Strategy was the establishment of a Northern Ireland Coastal and Marine Forum (CMF). This is an independent, non-statutory body made up of a cross-section of interests ranging from local government, business, agriculture, fishing and environmental bodies. The Forum aims to provide meaningful stakeholder input into strategic policies affecting the coastal area, as well as raising awareness on Integrated Coastal Zone Management.
- 3.38 It must be noted that this Strategy is a non-statutory document, and while it aims to promote a new coastal management approach, the duty and powers of regulating activities remain the responsibility of statutory bodies. The Strategy does not impose any new duties on Governmental Departments, public bodies, organisations or individuals. Instead it prompts all relevant bodies to take steps to implement those actions which they have committed to in the Strategy.



- 3.39 In addition to the guidance above, Amey Consulting with HR Wallingford were commissioned by the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) to carry out a Baseline Study and Gap Analysis of Coastal Erosion in Northern Ireland. The Report is an important first step in identifying areas that may be vulnerable to coastal erosion and has identified a number of key issues for consideration in determining the way forward. The Council continues to liaise with the Department on the outcome of this report.

## 4 Local Policy Context

### Legacy Development Plans

- 4.1 The following is a list of the legacy development plans that apply to the Borough:
- Antrim Area Plan 1984-2001 and its alterations (AAP);
  - Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001 (BUAP);
  - Carrickfergus Area Plan 2001<sup>2</sup> (CAP);
  - Draft Newtownabbey Area Plan 2005 (dNAP); and
  - Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (dBMAP).
- 4.2 It should be noted that the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan adopted in September 2014 was subsequently quashed as a result of a judgement of the Court of Appeal delivered in May 2017. As a consequence, the BUAP is now the statutory development plan for the Metropolitan Newtownabbey area of the Borough, with dBMAP remaining a material consideration.

### Community Plan – Love Living Here 2017

- 4.3 The Council's Community Plan, 'Love Living Here', sets out a shared vision and agreed outcomes for the area up to 2030. The successful implementation of the Community Plan will be marked by a demonstrable improvement in how services are delivered across the Borough and the quality of life its citizens experience. As such the Community Plan is an important document and has been taken into account in the preparation of the Council's LDP.
- 4.4 The Community Plan sets out four outcomes which are as follows:
- Our citizens enjoy good health and wellbeing;
  - Our citizens live in connected, safe, clean and vibrant places;
  - Our citizens benefit from economic prosperity; and
  - Our citizens achieve their full potential.

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<sup>2</sup> Insofar as it relates to that part of the legacy Carrickfergus Borough Council area at Greenisland that transferred to Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough in 2015 under Review of Public Administration (RPA).

- 4.5 It also sets out one wildly important goal namely that the Borough's vulnerable people are supported.

### **Corporate Plan – Our Borough Your Vision 2019-2030**

- 4.6 The Council's Corporate Plan sets out a vision for the Borough and identifies what it needs to do between now and 2030 to achieve this. The Vision for the Borough up to 2030 is defined as,

*'A progressive, smart and prosperous Borough. Inspired by our people; driven by ambition.'*

- 4.7 The Corporate Plan sets out a number of objectives in relation to Place, People and Prosperity. The LDP has a key role to play under the objective of 'Place' and the Corporate Plan states:

*'We will have succeeded if: People take pride in their surroundings. People feel safe. Our environment, natural habitats and built heritage are protected and enhanced. We have vibrant and welcoming towns, villages, neighbourhoods, and rural areas. We have an efficient planning process that promotes positive development and sustainable growth.'*

### **Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council Biodiversity Action Plan**

- 4.8 The Council is currently updating the Biodiversity Action Plan to include the entire Borough. When published, the data will be taken into account within the LDP and relevant updates applied.

### **Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council Draft Tourism Strategy**

- 4.9 Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council, in partnership with Tourism NI, published its draft Tourism Strategy in July 2017. This document details a range of visitor servicing provision and activities offered throughout the Borough, and identifies potential opportunities for investment and growth. A five-year Action Plan forms part of the overall Strategy, which outlines how the Council can support and grow the local tourism sector. In addition, an emphasis on collaboration between government, tourism agencies, Councils and the private sector have been outlined to support the delivery of this Tourism Strategy.

### **Council Masterplans/Village Plans**

- 4.10 Through the Village Renewal Scheme as supported by the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 the Council benefited from funding to devise and update plans for the development of villages in the Borough. Whilst these plans are non-statutory, they have been prepared in close conjunction with local residents and identify a range of potential projects to improve the settlements. These range from short term goals to long-term aspirations. The village plans alongside the masterplans relating to the Borough will be considered in the preparation of the LDP where relevant.

### Cross Boundary Policy Context

- 4.11 In considering the local policy context, it is important to note that the Borough does not sit in isolation. Accordingly, it will be important to take account of neighbouring local authorities comprising: Belfast City Council; Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council; Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council; Mid Ulster District Council and Mid and East Antrim Borough Council.
- 4.12 Neighbouring Council's Preferred Options Papers (POPs), supporting evidence base and draft Plan Strategies have been taken account of, as these are regarded as the main cross boundary documents to be considered in addition to regional guidance.
- 4.13 Table 1 indicates each Council's position in relation to the historic environment as set out in their POP and draft Plan Strategy documents.

**Table 1: Neighbouring Council Position**

Council	Document
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council	N/A
Belfast City Council	Draft Plan Strategy includes a coastal policy, defining a range of criteria, which states, 'In assessing new development proposals, the Council will seek to ensure the protection and enhancement of the district's coastal area.'
Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council	N/A
Mid and East Antrim Borough Council (MEA)	N/A
Mid Ulster District Council (MUDC)	N/A

- 4.14 The Council has responded to neighbouring Council's POPs and LDP documents as they are published. In addition, the Council is also represented on a number of working groups and project boards to discuss cross boundary issues. This includes the Metropolitan Area Spatial Working Group and the Belfast Metropolitan Plan Project Board.
- 4.15 In consideration of neighbouring Council's documents as well as regional policy, it is the opinion of the Council that it's draft Plan Strategy is sound and is not in conflict with neighbouring Council's emerging LDPs.

## 5 Preferred Options Paper

- 5.1 The Council's Preferred Options Paper (POP) was published in 2017 and was the first formal stage in the preparation of the LDP for the Borough and was designed to promote debate in relation to key strategic planning issues arising in the area. The POP set out a range of strategic options in relation to how and where development should be located within the Borough. It included options for the Borough's settlements, centres, employment land and housing locations, as well as a number of other key planning issues.
- 5.2 In addition, the Council asked the public for their views on a range of planning topics and issues. A total of 148 representations were received which were considered during the development of the draft Plan Strategy document and, where relevant, these will also be considered during the preparation of the Local Policies Plan. Details are set out in the Council's published 'Preferred Options Paper Public Consultation Report 2019'.

## 6 Soundness

- 6.1 The LDP has been prepared to meet the tests of soundness as set out in the Department for Infrastructure's Development Plan Practice Note 6: Soundness (Version 2, May 2017).

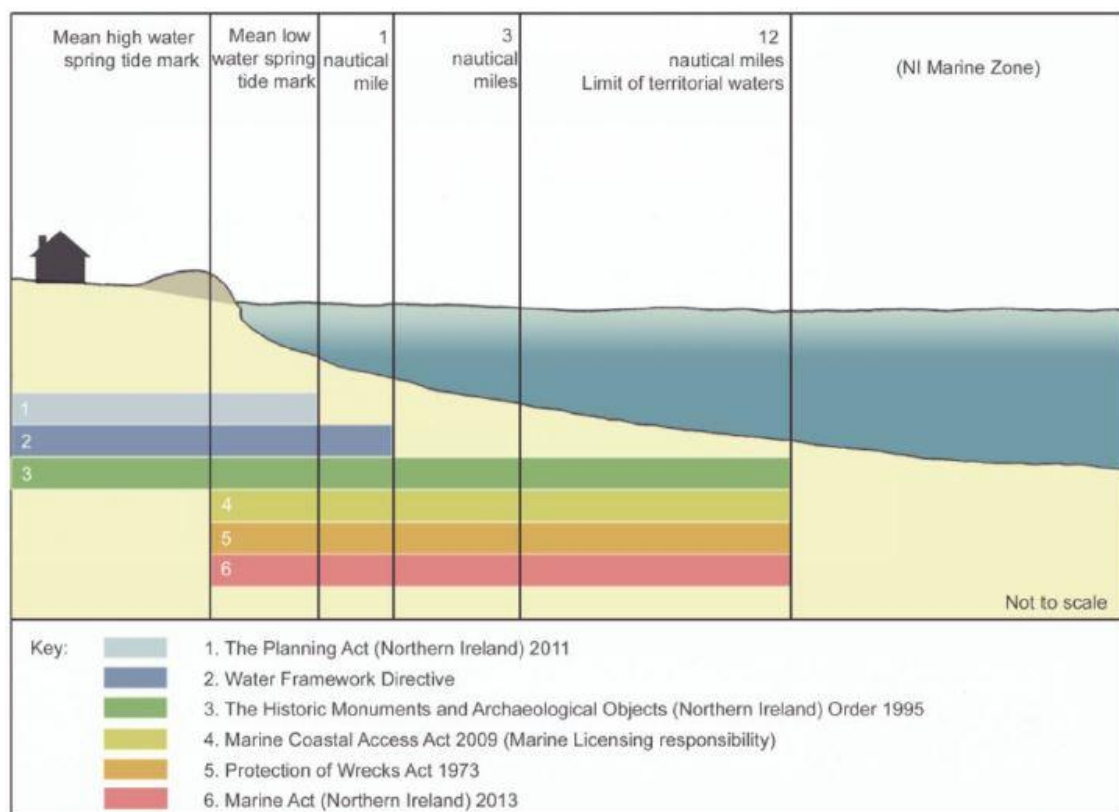
## 7 Planning in the Intertidal Region

- 7.1 Within the European Commission, the coastal zone is defined in general terms as 'An area which is perceived as the land – sea interface'. It is difficult to establish a universal definition for all the coastal zones in Europe due to the complex geographical boundaries, and institutional and governance arrangements of individual member states.
- 7.2 For the purposes of Integrated Coastal Management within the UK, the limit of the coastal zone has been defined as 1km (inland) - 3km (seaward) based on the holistic attributes of the coastal system identified through the Water Framework Directive. In the case of terrestrial planning, it should be noted that the new LDPs, PPSs and the regulation of development proposals currently do not extend beyond the Mean Spring Low Water Mark.
- 7.3 With regards to the ownership of the sea-bed out to the territorial limit of jurisdictional waters, the majority is owned by the Crown Estate. This ownership includes the rights to explore and utilise that natural resources of the UK's Continental Shelf. The Crown Estate owns approximately 55% of the foreshore and around half of estuary and tidal riverbeds<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/coastal-regions-northern-ireland>

- 7.4 The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 and the Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013 introduces a new system of marine planning for the Northern Ireland Inshore and Offshore regions. The draft Marine Plan created by DAERA Marine and Fisheries Division, provides a regional approach for the application of the national policy objectives defined by the Marine Policy Statement (i.e. Achieve Good Ecological Status of Marine Waters). The draft Marine Plan takes account of the economic, social and environmental needs of the marine area, and provides guidance and operational policies.
- 7.5 The Marine Plan for Northern Ireland, once adopted, and the Marine Policy Statement are the key documents that planning authorities must consider for undertaking their responsibilities within the Intertidal Area in respect of:
- The Local Development Plan;
  - Development Management; and
  - Enforcement.
- 7.6 The adopted Marine Plan will be considered within the Planning Hierarchy as the same level as the RDS 2035. It's policies will be considered as a material consideration within the development process for land based applications in the Intertidal Area. Coastal policy development for the Council's new LDP requires early engagement with the Marine Division and other marine stakeholders to ensure that proposals are consistent within the marine area and jointly aid the enhancement of sustainable development.
- 7.7 Terrestrial planning consent and enforcement decisions that could affect or influence the marine area must be made in accordance with the above marine documents unless relevant considerations dictate otherwise.
- 7.8 As planning legislation extends to the mean low water mark; there is an area of overlapping responsibilities in the intertidal area, this is illustrated in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Geographical overlap of the Intertidal Area**

Source: DOENI (2015) 'Planning in the Coastal Area – A developer's guide to planning considerations and environmental responsibilities.

### Marine Licensing

- 7.9 The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 provides the framework for marine licensing across the UK's offshore region. Within Northern Ireland, marine licensing applies to Northern Ireland's entire inshore region from the Mean Spring High Water Mark out the 12 nautical miles, as defined by the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Laws of the Seas. This includes any sea loughs, estuary or river, so far as the tide flows at the Mean Spring High Water Mark, for example Belfast Lough within the Council's Boundary is included as part of the inshore region.
- 7.10 DAERA, Marine and Fisheries Group have a range of responsibilities for managing and licensing various marine based activities (i.e. construction works, deposits at sea, and dredging the sea bed). Additionally, they have responsibility for the implementation of legislation relating to the coastal environment, habitats and landscapes. DAERA is responsible for protecting the marine area while maximising the sustainable use of its resources, now and for future generations. Their main areas of work include:
- Managing ecological and water quality including bathing and shellfish waters under EC Directives;

- Managing and protecting marine species and habitats;
- Managing and protecting marine cultural heritage assets;
- Managing legislative and consenting requirements in the marine area; and
- Developing a Marine Plan for Northern Ireland.

7.11 The licensing system enables a consistent approach for the decision making process for activities which aims to support sustainable development and enhance the conservation of the marine environment. The approach ensures that decisions are balanced to mitigate conflict management within the marine environment. Licensing within the Intertidal Area requires a shared responsibility between the Marine Division and Planning Authorities. Certain activities or development along/adjacent to the coast may require a marine licence as well as planning permission.

7.12 Some marine licensable activities may also form part of a plan or project that requires an Environmental Impact Assessment under The Marine Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2007 (as amended) or a Habitats Regulations Assessment under The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended). However, the same proposal may also require an Environmental Impact Assessment for the onshore development under The Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 and/or a Habitat Regulations Assessment<sup>4</sup>.

### **Marine Conservation Areas**

7.13 The Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013 provides the framework for DAREA to establish a network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), through the designation of individual Marine Conservation Zones (MCZ) within the Northern Ireland Inshore Region. MCZs are designated to protect internationally and nationally important habitats, species and geological features.<sup>5</sup>

7.14 In Northern Ireland, MPAs also consist of the marine components of RAMSAR sites, marine Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, Areas of Special Scientific Interest, and MCZs<sup>6</sup>.

## **8 Coastal Flooding and Erosion**

8.1 The European Floods Directive transposed into local legislation through the Water Environment (Floods Directive) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009 identifies the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) as the Competent Authority for the delivery of the EU Floods Directive in Northern Ireland, with the day-to-day

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<sup>4</sup> Planning in the Coastal Area – A developer's guide to planning considerations and environmental responsibilities - DOE, April 2015

<sup>5</sup> DOE leaflet - Marine Conservation Zones in the Northern Ireland Inshore Region

<sup>6</sup> DOE leaflet - Marine Conservation Zones in the Northern Ireland Inshore Region

functions expedited by DfI Rivers. It has responsibility of maintaining 26km of sea defences and two tidal barriers in Northern Ireland. DfI has the responsibility for coastal defences that protect the public road and railway network.

- 8.2 A key part towards the implementation of the Floods Directive was the publication by DfI Rivers of the Strategic Flood Maps for Northern Ireland. Now the Flood Maps NI contain a suite of detailed flood hazard maps. These maps have been prepared for areas that have been determined to be at significant risk of flooding.
- 8.3 With regards to flood risk, the LPD will need to take account of the potential risks from all sources of flooding over the LDP period and beyond, as this will influence decisions on land use planning. The LDP will aim to avoid zoning land for development in flood risk areas, outside of these areas it may still be possible to zone for development if appropriate mitigation strategies are included combat the risk. An example of a mitigation strategy could include a susceptible flood risk area within a proposal to be retained as open space or that construction uses water resistant materials.
- 8.4 PPS 15 concludes that development plans have a role to play in furthering a more sustainable approach to flood management. This includes a number of measures such as:
- Flood avoidance through the careful selection of housing and economics zonings;
  - Identifying flood plains and safeguarding them from development likely to impact upon their flood storage and conveyancing capacity;
  - Identifying and safeguarding from development, areas of storm exceedance; and
  - Promoting sustainable drainage schemes (SuDS).
- 8.5 Coastal erosion can be defined as ‘the removal of material from the coast by wave action, tidal currents and/or the activities of man, typically causing a landward retreat of the coastline’<sup>7</sup>. Coastal erosion is a natural process and its effects can be witnessed on cliffs, tidal flats, salt-marches and beaches through land retreat. Those most directly at risk from coastal erosion are those living in lowland areas or soft sediment coastlines where coastal erosion can cause flooding, rock falls, loss of land and damage to infrastructure.
- 8.6 The occurrence of coastal erosion is dependent on the balance between resistance of the coastline and the strength of erosion rate of the waves and tides affecting the area. The conditions that create erosion scenarios are reliant on a number of factors including:

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<sup>7</sup> British Geological Survey, 2012. Coastal Erosion.



- Topography;
- The composition and structure of the geological formations exposed at the coast;
- The state of man-made coastal defences;
- Local currents and tidal range;
- Wave climate (as characterised by wave height, period, direction and fetch)
- Groundwater;
- Sediment supply; and
- Relative sea level<sup>8</sup>.

8.7 The influence of human interaction combined with extreme weather events at the coastal zone have highlighted the problem of coastal erosion. Human interventions through coastal engineering, land reclamation, river basin regulation works, dredging and water extraction all contribute to erosion. Human interaction undermines flood defences, both natural and engineered, creating the potential for coastal flooding and damage to infrastructure and private property.

8.8 According to DfI Rivers, significant coastal flooding is a relatively infrequent occurrence in Northern Ireland. Nevertheless, there have been witnessed rises in major weather related storm events that have caused significant pressures to the coastal zone. Most notably was the tidal surge of January 2014, which caused almost £1.4m infrastructure damage and nearly resulted in a major catastrophe flood event within Belfast City Centre, through tidal surges in Belfast Lough.

8.9 The 'Towards an Integrated Coastal Zone Management Strategy for Northern Ireland 2006-2026' has outlined that potential impacts from climatic change, including rising sea levels will put existing beaches dunes and flooding infrastructure under pressure. This will have implications for the long-term sustainability for the coastal zone for planning, natural heritage protection and landscape integrity.

8.10 Traditionally in Northern Ireland, Coastal Protection Measures have been implemented through the Drainage Council based on the Bateman Formula. This formula identifies that each independent department has responsibility to protect their piece of coast if deemed appropriate. This approach has created a fragmented and adhoc focused coastal management system, with no specific policy or legislation for coastal erosion in Northern Ireland. The result has been a plethora of hard engineering sea defences that have been employed around the coast to protect individual sites of infrastructure without strategic co-ordination and having little regard for the wider environmental

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<sup>8</sup> British Geological Survey, 2012. Coastal Erosion.

consequences. In many cases, hard engineering approaches have exacerbated problems, causing further erosion along the coastline. It must be noted in Northern Ireland there is no formal system or government intervention mechanism for coastal defence of private properties.

- 8.11 DAERA has developed an erosion layer for its Marine Map Viewer, which can be accessed on its website. This highlights those areas along the coast, where there is a risk of vulnerability to natural, historic and physical assets to coastal erosion.
- 8.12 The viewer highlights that the coastal zone of the Borough is of moderate and high risk from coastal erosion.

## **9 Coastal Development in the Borough**

The coastal area comprises the main features of the land, intertidal zone and the sea. In bringing forward policy approaches within the LDP, the Council will need to consider the identification of the type of coast.

### **The Developed Coast**

- 9.1 The SPPS states that the developed coast includes existing settlements and major developments such as ports and power stations. These areas are the focus of economic, social and recreational development along the coastal interface. Additionally, the developed coast can include areas of natural heritage importance, cultural heritage importance, landscape quality areas, and open space and recreation. The developed coast should be the focus for developments requiring a coastal location or for developments which contribute to the economic wellbeing of coastal settlements. When a development at the coast is deemed appropriate opportunities for the redevelopment and re-use of brownfield sites should be considered. The Council's approach to coastal development has taken account of the provisions of the SPPS and RDS 2035.
- 9.2 The coastline of the Borough is situated along Belfast Lough, which is a large intertidal sea lough located at the mouth of River Lagan. The inner lough is characterised by mudflats, shell dominated banks and artificial lagoons. The coastline is of high scenic quality and is important in terms of economic, social and environmental diversity with activities including recreation and tourism.
- 9.3 The entire stretch of the Council's coastal area of approximately 7.5km is located within the area defined as the 'Developed Coast' within the Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland and the SPPS.

### **Coastal Natural Heritage**

- 9.4 Belfast Lough is a biologically diverse ecosystem and is considered important for wintering seabirds and waders. These species are protected by international and national nature conservation designations.

- 9.5 Belfast Lough qualifies as a RAMSAR site by regularly supporting significant internationally important numbers of redshank in winter. The site also regularly supports nationally important numbers of shelduck, oystercatcher, purple sandpiper, dunlin, black-tailed godwit, bar-tailed godwit, curlew and turnstone. Belfast Lough as a whole is also used by several other waterfowl species including great crested grebe, scaup, eider, goldeneye and red-breasted merganser.
- 9.6 The Belfast Lough open water area comprises the marine area below the mean low water mark. Seawards it extends to a notional boundary between the eastern limits on the north and south shores of the Outer Belfast Lough Area of Special Scientific Interest at Kilroot and Horse Rock respectively<sup>9</sup>. The site qualifies as a Special Protection Area (SPA) under Article 4.2 of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting internationally important populations of Great Crested Grebe. The SPA boundary is coincident with that of the Belfast Lough Ramsar and qualifies as an SPA by regularly supporting internationally important numbers of redshank in winter.
- 9.7 The Inner Lough Area of Belfast Lough has been designated as an Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) due to its fauna importance. The designation includes areas of intertidal mudflats, which when exposed are utilised as feeding grounds by wildfowl and waders. The area includes lagoons and land, either reclaimed or being reclaimed (Belfast Harbour) and are important roosting localities for wildfowl and waders<sup>10</sup>. Despite considerable alteration from the original ecosystem dynamics through development and land reclamation, the area remains an important natural heritage designation as it retains significant numbers of migrant and over-wintering wildfowl and waders.
- 9.8 Additionally, the outer area of Belfast Lough has been designated as an ASSI for flora, fauna and geological features. The area is important for Ordovician series of spilific lavas, black shales and greywackes. The Carboniferous series of the Holywood group are also of significance and the Permian rocks are the best-exposed series of rocks of this age in Ireland. <sup>11</sup>The habitat range includes open mud flats, boulder and rock shore, extensive mussel beds and a narrow shoreline strip of semi-natural vegetation including small, isolated pockets of beachhead saltmarsh.
- 9.9 An area of sea at the mouth of Belfast Lough, where it enters the Irish Sea just of the coast from Bangor, is designated as a Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) within the Northern Ireland Inshore Region. The Outer Belfast Lough MCZ includes the water within the marine area and any seabed or other land (whether or not covered by water) seaward of the mean high water spring tide mark. The MCZ has been designated due to presence of a well-established

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<sup>9</sup> Northern Ireland Environment Agency, 2010. Register of European Sites in Northern Ireland.

<sup>10</sup> Northern Ireland Environment Agency, 2008, Inner Belfast Lough ASSI.

<sup>11</sup> Northern Ireland Environment Agency, 2008, Outer Belfast Lough ASSI.

population of Ocean quahog that lives buried in sediment<sup>12</sup>. Although not within the Borough, this MCZ further illustrates the natural heritage importance of the coastal zone within Belfast Lough.

### **Landscape Importance**

- 9.10 The Borough's coastal area is identifiable with it's own unique characteristics, which closely align with the Seascape Character Assessment of the Belfast Lough shoreline that was defined by DAERA. Along the western shore of Belfast Lough, Metropolitan Newtownabbey has an impressive natural setting with shoreline vistas and the backdrop of the Carrickfergus Escarpment. The coastal area is located in the 'Belfast Lough and Islandmagee' Regional Landscape Character Area.
- 9.11 The Council's Landscape Character Assessment Update, 2018, identified that the coastal area provides an attractive perceptual quality boosted by impressive long view across Belfast Lough towards Holywood and the Craigantlet Hills. To the west, there are short views into the Carrickfergus Escarpment Area of High Scenic Value. The combination of the sea lough, design and setting of the urban area and the importance of landmark vistas help to justify the landscape importance of this area. The addition of community facilities within this area help to create an enjoyable and fully accessible landscape.
- 9.12 There is Local Landscape Policy Area (LLPA) within the legacy BMAP, located at Hazelbank Park, which is located within Landscape Character Area 114 Three and Six Mile Valleys (Northern Ireland Landscape Character Assessment (NICLA), DAERA, 2000). The LLPA contains areas of long established woodland and mature specimen trees, remnants of the parkland landscape, and more recent woodland planting. Together this vegetation forms the landscape framework to the park and contributes to the attractive treed backdrop to the shoreline. The LLPA provides views of Belfast Lough and the North Down coast as well as of the Belfast Hills. The views and setting of this LLPA contribute to the landscape character of Metropolitan Newtownabbey and the wider Belfast Urban Area.
- 9.13 There is also a LLPA designation at the Jordanstown Loughshore Park and it is located in LCA 114 Three and Six Mile Water Valleys (NICLA). The LLPA is an important green open space and amenity area of landscape and visual importance within a densely populated area, viewed by passing motorists and pedestrians. It is extensively used by local people for recreation and visited by tourists.

### **Existing Development and Transport Infrastructure**

- 9.14 Residential development along the shoreline consists of linear patterns of development consisting of large/medium detached dwellings located in large

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<sup>12</sup> Northern Ireland Environment Agency, 2016, Outer Belfast Lough Conservation Zone.

curtilages. There is a small amount of modern designed apartments with vistas overlooking Belfast Lough. All residential development has some form of coastal defence (i.e. sea wall) at the bottom of their site boundary to protect from wave over-topping, storm surge and coastal erosion events.

- 9.15 The entirety of the coastal area runs adjacent to the main arterial route of the M5/A2 between Belfast and Carrickfergus. The transport route is motorway at the M5 and joins the A2 Shore road in Newtownabbey. The road from Newtownabbey to Jordanstown is a 4-lane single carriageway with the road extending to a dual carriageway from Jordanstown to Carrickfergus. The road is a main commuter route with 36,000 cars running north of Greenisland and 35,000 south of Greenisland per day<sup>13</sup>.
- 9.16 The road network neighbouring the coastline is extensively protected from coastal events by series of rock armour installations and sea walls. Figure 2 overleaf shows the sea wall protecting the A2 Shore Road Arterial route at Whiteabbey.

**Figure 2: A2 Shore Road Whiteabbey**



### **Tourism and Recreational Importance**

- 9.17 The coastal area of the Borough contains significant recreation and tourism opportunities. There are three parks in this area: Gideon's Green; Hazelbank; and Loughshore Park at Jordanstown. These are linked through a towpath and cycle route between Metropolitan Newtownabbey and Belfast.

<sup>13</sup> Source: Northern Ireland Road Site, 2015.

- 9.18 The Loughshore Park at Jordanstown is a linear park on the shores of Belfast Lough with panoramic views with of visual importance and important open green space and amenity value. Facilities include an equipped play area, amenity grassland, picnic areas and paths. Additionally, there is a Council owned 14-pitch touring caravan site with supporting modern amenities.
- 9.19 Hazelbank Park is a valuable public amenity that comprises a bowling green, car parking, playground, woodland and path network. The park represents a key recreational asset with amenity areas of open grassland, a path along the shoreline and forms part of the national cycle route. The area is identified an Area of Existing Open Space in the legacy BMAP, which reinforces the amenity and recreational value of the area.

**Figure 3: Jordanstown Loughshore Park**



### **Blue Infrastructure**

- 9.20 There is potential within the LDP to incorporate Blue Infrastructure within the coastal area. Traditionally Green Infrastructure incorporates forests, woodlands, parks, urban gardens, allotments and open space. Blue Infrastructure includes lagoons, ponds, rivers, loughs and drainage features. These infrastructure features can provide biodiversity conservation, recreational space, amenity value, natural flood defences, carbon stores, as well as a means to reduce erosion and air or water pollution. Green/Blue infrastructure can be used as a planning tool to deliver sustainable development.
- 9.21 Through careful planning, Green/Blue Infrastructure with natural and semi-natural features can be strategically connected to form a network that provides environmental, economic and social benefits for all members of society.



## Coastal Risk

- 9.22 The Borough's coastal area is extensively protected through hard-engineered sea defences either constructed by DfI, the Council or private landowners. Although protected through hard engineering structures this does not entirely remove the risk. These defences are designed to protect land from a specific height of inundation and are not designed to deal with the increasing onset of risk associated with climatic change.
- 9.23 DfI Rivers flood risk mapping assessment, along with the North East River Basin Management Plan has identified that areas of Metropolitan Newtownabbey (Whiteabbey) that are at moderate risk from coastal storm flood events. The projections for AEP rates of 1:200 year events include current flood risk and cumulated projections from climatic change within the coastal floodplain.
- 9.24 Site examination of the A2 transport corridor at Whiteabbey suggest that there is a moderate vulnerability from coastal storm events. During Storm Ophelia, 2017, sand bags were laid at access point to shoreline along the sea wall as shown in Figure 4.

**Figure 4: Sandbags on A2 Shore Road at Whiteabbey**



- 9.25 The Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA) for Northern Ireland 2012 has identified a range of climate risks across a variety of sectors. The assessment indicates that increases in flooding and coastal erosion will affect people, properties, infrastructure and coastal squeeze. Coastal erosion will affect beaches, intertidal areas, grazing marshes. Combined, these threats are

potentially significant for Northern Ireland from a changing climate from the potential impacts of coastal flooding, erosion and land instability.

## 10 Key Findings

- 10.1 This evidence paper has provided an overview of policies relevant to the coastal area of the Borough and has demonstrated the overlapping relationship between terrestrial and marine planning. This paper highlights that Planning Authorities must have regard to the Marine Policy Statement and Marine Plan for Northern Ireland (once adopted) in the preparation of the Council's Community Plan and LDP. The Marine Policy Statement and adopted Marine Plan will be material considerations and all developments that could affect the marine area must be in accordance with these documents, unless considerations indicate otherwise.
- 10.2 It is identified that the entirety of the Borough's coastal area is located within the 'Developed Coast'. The planning approach will be balanced on a precautionary approach with sustainable enhancement and regeneration of the Urban Area, without exacerbating the risks of coastal flooding or erosion.
- 10.3 It is important that the impact of climate change within the coastal dynamic and adequate provision for change is taken into account.
- 10.4 This paper recognised the importance of the coast within the Borough for tourism and recreation, along with its intrinsic natural heritage and landscape importance. It is important that the LDP continues the enhancement of the Borough's coastal area to further encourage citizen enjoyment of the recreational, economic and social features.





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