



## **MID AND EAST ANTRIM BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Position Paper 5

### **Environmental Assets**

JULY 2015

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## **Environmental Assets of Mid and East Antrim Borough Council.**

**Purpose:** To provide members with an overview of the existing environmental assets in the district and how these are protected.

**Content:** The paper provides information on:

- (i) the legislative and regional planning policy context for the protection, conservation and enhancement of the built and natural heritage, and landscape
- (ii) the role of the local development plan in the protection of the built and natural heritage and landscape.
- (iii) an overview of the built, natural and landscape assets within Mid and East Antrim Borough Council area.

**Recommendation:** That the Planning Committee notes the contents of this paper in particular the statutory obligations and the regional planning policy context for protecting the environmental assets within Mid and East Antrim Borough Council Borough.

### **Preamble**

This is one of a series of position papers being presented to the Planning Committee as part of the preparatory studies aimed at gathering the evidence base for the new local development plan. This particular paper is aimed at:

- informing Members of their European protected site obligation and potential implications; and
- furthering awareness of the link between the built, natural and landscape heritage and the local development plan function.

This position paper comprises of 3 parts;

Part A – Natural Heritage  
Part B - Built Heritage  
Part C – Landscape

## PART A – NATURAL HERITAGE

### 1.0 Introduction

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

1.2 The richness of our natural heritage, both in terms of landscape, natural environments and biodiversity is recognised in the significant number of international and regionally designated important sites. As custodians of our district, it is our responsibility to protect them for future generations. At many levels, development can potentially adversely impact on our environment and it is therefore important that all those involved in the planning process ensure that any potential environmental impacts, whatever the scale, are identified to enable effects to be considered, avoided or mitigated for.

1.3 Many areas in Northern Ireland are important for their natural heritage interest. Several of these areas have merited statutory designation and are protected under international (including European), national or local legislation and convention. Certain species and habitats also benefit from legal protection. In developing policy to protect natural heritage, it is a requirement that statutory obligations are met.

1.4 It is vitally important that, local authorities along with other public bodies, ensure that their decisions and actions are fully compliant with international obligations (both global and European) and their duties under the legislation of Northern Ireland.

1.5 The 'Natural Heritage' of Northern Ireland includes ecosystems and natural processes, plant and wildlife species and habitats (biodiversity) and earth science sites and features.

1.6 '**Ecosystem**' services are the benefits provided by ecosystems that contribute to making human life both possible and worth living. Examples of ecosystem services include products such as food and water, regulation of floods, soil erosion and disease outbreaks. Some ecosystem services involve the direct provision of material and non-material goods to people and depend on the presence of particular species of plants and animals, for example, food, timber, and medicines. Other ecosystem services arise directly or indirectly from the functioning of ecosystem processes. For example, the service of formation of soils and soil fertility that sustains crop and livestock production depends on the ecosystem processes of decomposition and nutrient cycling by soil micro-organisms

1.7 '**Natural processes**' involve the shaping of the physical environment of marine, coastal and terrestrial areas for example continuing evolution of river and coastal systems through erosion or deposition.

1.8 '**Biodiversity**' is the variety of plant and animal life in the world or in a particular place or habitat in which they live. In this context 'biodiversity' is referring to all habitats in Northern Ireland and the variety of animals and plants they support.

1.9 '**Earth Science**' is the study of rocks, minerals and fossils and the evidence of the shaping of the physical environment through natural processes.

## 2.0 Policy Context – Natural Heritage Designations

2.1 A hierarchy of designations is available under European, National and local legislation and designation is primarily the responsibility of NIEA (see Appendix 1 for list of legislation). Generally sites are selected for their rarity value or for the diversity of species and habitats they contain, or as a representative example of their habitat type on a local, national or international scale. Some designations are brought forward under the LDP process. The range of designations includes:

### *(a) International*

- **Special Protection Areas (SPAs)** – sites selected under the Birds Directive (EC) as being important areas for breeding, of wintering and migrating birds
- **Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)** – areas of certain natural habitats protected under the Habitats Directive. Collectively known as ‘Natura 2000’ sites.
- **Ramsar Sites** – wetlands listed under the Ramsar Convention to protect those of international importance.

### *(b) National*

- **Areas of Special Scientific Interest** - sites which are of special interest by reason of their flora, fauna, geological and/or physiographical features are designated under the Environment (NI) Order 2002 (as amended)
- **Nature Reserves and National Nature Reserves** – managed by the DOE or by agreement with another Department, a District Council or a voluntary conservation body;
- **Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty** – designated by the DOE primarily for their high landscape quality, wildlife importance and rich cultural and architectural heritage.

### *(c) Local*

- **Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) and Wildlife Refuges** – LNRs can be provided by District Councils under powers conferred on them under the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Northern Ireland) Order 1985. Wildlife Refuges are provided for under the Wildlife Order.
- **Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance** – identified through the LDP process with policies provided in the plan for their protection and /or enhancement.

## 3.0 Regional Planning Policy Context

3.1 The RDS 2035 aims to protect and enhance the environment for current and future generations. It recognises that Northern Ireland’s environment is one of its greatest assets which have benefits in terms of the economy and quality of life. Regional Guidance seeks to conserve, protect, and where possible, enhance our built heritage and our natural environment (RG11).

3.2 The RDS recognises that the natural environment directly supports all life and is an asset to society and in promoting sustainable development and well being. Specific aims include the following;

- Sustain and enhance biodiversity in line with the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy;
- Identify, establish, protect and manage ecological networks;
- Protect and encourage green and blue infrastructure within urban areas;
- Protect and manage important geological and geomorphological features;
- Protect and enhance and manage the coast;
- Protect, enhance and restore the quality of inland water bodies;
- Recognise and promote the conservation of local identity and distinctive landscape character;
- Conserve, protect and where possible enhance areas recognised for their landscape quality;
- Protect designated areas of countryside from inappropriate development (either directly or indirectly) and continue to assess areas of designation;

### 3.3 **PPS2 and Draft Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS)**

Planning Policy Statement 2 (PPS 2) Planning and Nature Conservation, sets out the current regional policy for the protection of conservation interests. This document will be replaced by the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS), a Draft of which was issued for consultation in February 2014.

### 3.4 The regional Strategic Objectives for Natural Heritage are to:

- Conserve, enhance and restore the abundance, quality, diversity and distinctiveness of the regions natural heritage;
- Further sustainable development by ensuring that biological and geographical diversity are conserved and enhanced as an integral part of social, economic and environmental development;
- Assist in meeting international (including European), national and local responsibilities and obligations in the protection and enhancement of the natural heritage;
- Contribute to rural renewal and urban regeneration by ensuring developments take account of the role and value of biodiversity in supporting economic diversification and contributing to a high quality environment;
- Protect and enhance biodiversity, geodiversity and the environment; and
- Take actions to reduce our carbon footprint and facilitate adaption to climate change.

## 4.0 **Other Relevant Strategies**

### 4.1 **Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy**

Sustaining and enhancing biodiversity is fundamental to furthering sustainable development. The EU Biodiversity Strategy seeks to halt the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services by 2020 and this is reflected in both Priority 3 of the Programme for Government (PfG) and the RDS. Furthermore, the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 places a statutory duty on every public body to further the conservation of biodiversity. The

Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy 2002 sets the framework for biodiversity action up to 2016. There are 51 habitat types identified as priorities for conservation action in Northern Ireland. A new biodiversity strategy is being prepared to help halt the loss of biodiversity and degradation of ecosystems up to 2020, is currently being prepared by the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Group.

4.2 Examples of priority habitats in Mid and East Antrim Borough Council Area are blanket bogs and lowland raised bogs and lagoons. Priority species include Common Swift, Curlew, Red Grouse, Red Squirrel and Ground Beetle. The range of priority habitats and species listed through the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy will be protected from development and proposals that could harm their integrity, continuity, links or ecological relationships.

4.3 Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs) aim to conserve biodiversity through local partnerships, taking into account both national and local priorities by involving local people and local organisations through practical delivery of biodiversity conservation. The Mid and East Antrim Borough Council LBAP was published in December 2014.

4.4 Link to LBAP - <http://www.midandeastantrim.gov.uk/downloads/lbap-mea-final.pdf>

#### **4.5 The Marine Policy Statement (March 2011) and the Marine Plan for Northern Ireland (DOE) (when adopted).**

4.6 The Marine Policy Statement and Marine Plan for NI recognise the importance of the interaction between the land and the sea planning systems – Of particular relevance are the legal requirements of the Marine & Coastal Access Act (Art 58) and the Marine Act (NI) 2013 (Art 8) which state that all public authorities must have regard to the MPS (and the Marine Plan) when taking decisions (e.g. the development of an area plan) which is capable of affecting the UK marine area – They set out the framework for Northern Ireland's seas based on a system of marine planning that will balance conservation, energy and resource needs and improve management for marine nature conservation among other things. It applies to both off shore and inshore regions including all tidal rivers and sea loughs

#### **4.7 The Water Framework Directive 2000**

4.8 Is transposed into law through the Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003 (Statutory Rule 2005 No. 544). Its aim is to establish a framework to protect all surface waters and groundwater with the aim to reach good ecological and chemical status in all waters as a rule by 2015.

4.9 Both the Habitats and Birds Directives and the Water Framework Directive aim at ensuring healthy aquatic ecosystems while at the same time ensuring a balance between water/nature protection and the sustainable use of nature's natural resources.

### **5.0 Role of Local Development Plan**

#### **5.1 Planning Approach**

5.2 In plan-making councils should take full account of the implications of proposed land use zonings, locations for development and settlement limits on natural heritage features within or adjoining the plan area. Natural heritage features and designated sites should be identified as part of the plan-making process. Where appropriate, policies should be brought forward for their protection and / or enhancement). LDPs should also identify and promote the design of ecological networks throughout the plan area which could help reduce the fragmentation and isolation of natural habitats through a strategic approach

5.3 The most common form of conserving biodiversity is designation, protection and management of the best sites of nature conservation importance through the Plan by designating Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCIs). LDPs should also have regard to any Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs) which have been prepared for the district council area

5.4 LDPs should seek to protect and integrate certain features of the natural heritage when zoning sites for development through 'key site requirements' (KSRs) and identify and promote green and blue infrastructure where this will add value to the provision, enhancement and connection of open space and habitats in and around settlements.

## **5.5 Key Legislation for a Local Development Plan**

5.6 Combined with the comprehensive coverage of European Directives, there is a legal requirement on any planning authority to ensure that plans, programmes and projects likely to have significant effects on the environment are made subject to an environmental assessment, prior to their approval or authorisation. Consultation with the public is a key feature of environmental assessment procedures. The level of environmental assessment is proportionate to the scale of the plan, programme or project proposed.

5.7 The Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 now places a statutory duty on those planning authorities producing a LDP to undertake a **Sustainability Appraisal** (SA). This incorporates the principles of sustainable development when preparing such plans and assesses not just the potential environmental impacts of the plan but any economic and social impacts as well.

5.8 To assess the environmental implications, the SA will incorporate a **Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)**. European Directive 2001/42/EC 'on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment', commonly referred to as the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive, is transposed into Northern Ireland law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (NI) 2004 (EAPP (NI) 2004). The objective of SEA is to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental consideration into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development.

5.9 SEA must be carried out in conjunction with, and parallel to, the development of any plan and integrated with the plan process. Under the provisions of the SEA Directive and the Regulations, an Environmental Report is published with the draft plan and must be taken into account before the adoption of the LDP.

5.10 Under the provisions of the **Habitats Regulations**, plan-making authorities are required to undertake an **Appropriate Assessment** for any development plan (or development proposal) which either individually, or in combination with other plans or projects, is likely to significantly affect a European Site such as a SPA or SAC.

5.11 The purpose of an Appropriate Assessment is to assess the impacts of a land-use plan against the conservation objectives of a European site. The purpose of an appropriate assessment is to ascertain whether the plan is likely to adversely affect site integrity. Where significant negative effects are identified, alternative options should be examined to avoid any potentially damaging effects.

5.12 The Shared Environmental Service (Mid & East Antrim Borough Council) will provide advice to the Council to support the preparation of Local Development Plans and will carry out Habitats Regulations Assessments of these plans. However, the undertaking of SA incorporating a Strategic Environmental Assessment will be the responsibility of the Council.



## **6.0 Environmental Assets (Natural Heritage) Mid and East Antrim Borough Council**

6.1 As a planning authority, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council Borough must pursue economic and social priorities while simultaneously being aware of legislative obligations and regional policy direction in relation to our environmental assets. Therefore this section, is a summary of the natural assets which pertain to Mid and East Antrim Borough Council MEA area contains:

- 4 RAMSAR sites
- 3 Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)
- 5 Special Protected Areas (SPAs)
- 36 ASSI's
- 4 National Nature Reserves
- 3 Local Nature Reserve
- 23 SLNCl's (Carrickfergus section of BMAP only)

Further details of the above natural heritage features can be found in Maps 3A and 3B of Appendix 3

\*All current environmental designations except local are available on the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) website [www.doeni.gov.uk/niea](http://www.doeni.gov.uk/niea)

## **PART B - ARCHAEOLOGY AND BUILT HERITAGE**

### **1.0 Introduction**

1.1 Mid and East Antrim Borough Council has a wide and diverse range of archaeology and built heritage. The evidence of the historical development of the Borough can be clearly seen in our rich archaeological sites such as tombs, forts, castles and churches, vernacular and listed buildings. These markers and reminders of how the Borough has evolved over time are to be valued and protected as they provide a tangible link between the present and the past.

1.2 The Boroughs built heritage can play a vitally important part in helping to encourage growth and stimulate national and local economies. Local authorities through their planning function are at the forefront of ensuring due consideration is given to this rich legacy by enabling the successful management of change. Having access to appropriate expertise can ensure that decisions affecting our historic buildings and archaeological sites are based on sound and well informed information thereby creating successful places in which people will choose to live, work and visit.

1.3 The diverse and rich nature of our heritage assets is recognised through the number of regionally important sites located within Mid and East Antrim Borough Council. As custodians it is our responsibility to ensure their continued protection and enhancement. At many levels, development pressures can potentially adversely impact on our heritage assets. It is therefore important to strike a balance which will ensure that any potential impacts, whatever the scale, are identified and if possible mitigated through the planning process.

### **2.0 Policy Context - Archaeology and Built Heritage**

2.1 This chapter identifies key national and regional regulatory framework relating to Archaeology and Built Heritage. A hierarchy of designations is available through national and local legislation. (Refer to Appendix 1 for list of legislation). Generally sites are selected for their intrinsic historic value. They represent all periods of human settlement in Ireland from around 7,000BC to the 20th century, and include some of the premier examples of monument types in Northern Ireland.

**2.2 Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011** - Part 4 Additional planning control, Chapter 1, Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas.

### **2.3 Regional Planning Policy Context - Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035: Building a Better Future**

2.4 The Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS) sets out regional guidance in relation to the built and natural environment - "*Conserve, protect and where possible, enhance our built heritage and our natural environment*" (RG11). It recognises that Northern Ireland has a rich and diverse archaeological and built heritage which contributes to our sense of place and history. It also regards built heritage as a key tourism and recreational asset that, if managed in a sustainable way, can make a valuable contribution to the environment, economy and society<sup>1</sup>. The built heritage embraces many sites of local and international interest which once lost cannot be replaced.

Policy RG11 of the RDS indicates the requirement to;

- Identify, protect and conserve the built heritage, including archaeological sites and monuments.

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<sup>1</sup> Regional Development Strategy 2035 "Building a Better Future", 2010, DRD

- Identify, protect and converse the character and built heritage assets within cities, towns and villages.
- Maintain the integrity of built heritage assets, including historic landscapes.

## **2.5 Draft Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS), PPS 6**

### **Planning, Archaeology and the Built Heritage and Addendum, PPS 21 Sustainable Development in the Countryside and the Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland.**

2.6 PPS 6, sets out the current regional policy provision for the protection of our built heritage. Reference is also made within PPS21 and Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland for the protection, retention and sympathetic refurbishment, with adaptation if necessary, of non-listed vernacular dwellings.

2.7 The policy documents listed above will in time be replaced by the policies as contained within the SPPS

2.8 In the preparation of LDPs councils should take into consideration and identify the main<sup>2</sup> built and archaeological heritage features, where they exist within the Plan area, and bring forward appropriate policies or proposals for their protection, conservation and enhancement. It should also take into account the implications of its other local policies and proposals, land use zonings, settlement development limits and the impacts they may have on all features of archaeology and built heritage and their settings within or adjoining the Plan area.

2.9 Archaeological features and heritage assets such as tombs and ring forts, historic and vernacular buildings, planned parklands, buildings and features associated with industrial heritage, are all important sources of information about our past, and are often significant landmarks in the present townscape and countryside. The Local Authority has a key role in the stewardship of our archaeological and built heritage. The aim of the SPPS in relation to Archaeology and Built Heritage is to manage change in positive ways so as to safeguard that which society regards as important whilst facilitating development that will contribute to the ongoing retention, conservation and enhancement of these assets.

## **2.10 SPPS Regional Strategic Objectives.**

2.11 The regional strategic objectives for archaeology and built heritage are to;

- Secure the protection conservation and, where possible, the enhancement of our built and archaeological heritage;
- Promote sustainable development and environmental stewardship with regard to our built and archaeological heritage;
- Deliver economic and community benefit through conservation that facilitates productive use of built heritage assets and opportunities for investment, whilst safeguarding their historic or architectural integrity.

## **3.0 Other Relevant Government Strategies**

### **3.1 The Impacts of Climate Change on the Built Heritage of Northern Ireland.**

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<sup>2</sup> It may not be feasible for the LDP to identify and bring forward policies specific to individual heritage assets.

3.2 In summary all predicted climate changes are likely to have negative consequences on the historic environment of Northern Ireland. While all built structures may have to deal with this, there are strong additional negative consequences for historic features near coasts or freshwater and wetlands plus those on/in clay soils which will need particular attention. NIEA Built Heritage is currently developing recommendations for managing the built heritage of Northern Ireland during this period of rapid environmental change.

#### **4.0 Heritage Assets Character of Mid and East Antrim Borough Council Borough**

4.1 The Borough of Mid and East Antrim Borough Council has a wealth of built heritage assets ranging from the state maintained historic monument of Carrickfergus Castle a Norman fortified castle build built by John de Courcy in 1177, Glenarm Castle a beautiful Jacobethan style mansion set in an area of outstanding natural beauty and home to the Earls of Antrim for over 400 years, and Galgorm Castle which was constructed in 1618 by Sir Faithful Fortescue and is recognised as one of the finest examples of early Jacobean architecture in Ireland. As the planning authority, it must pursue economic and social priorities while safeguarding our heritage assets, the Borough contains:

- **8** State Care Monuments
- **155** Scheduled Monuments
- **1294** Unscheduled Monuments
- **20** Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesnes
- **692** Listed Buildings
- **5** Conservation Areas
- **2** Areas of Townscape Character
- **1** Areas of Significant Archaeological Interest
- **3** Areas of Archaeological Potential

## PART C - LANDSCAPE

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Northern Ireland's landscapes are its hidden treasure, something often recognised by others who visit but sadly less so by most of us living here. **The European Landscape Convention (ELC)** defines 'landscape' as 'an area as perceived by people whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors' and 'it concerns landscapes that might be considered outstanding as well as every day or degraded landscapes'. 'It is a new way of thinking about landscape, responsive to different local, national and regional interpretations. It is not simply about landscape as biodiversity or ecology. It's not only concerned with the countryside or matters of heritage. It addresses the experience we have of a place. A more democratic concept, it relates to remarkable *and* degraded landscapes, the special *and* the everyday, all territories from rural to urban; all areas, from the most treasured to the most nondescript and unloved, the places and spaces in desperate need of regeneration.'

1.2 In January 2014 the DOE published its first Landscape Charter in response to its obligations under the European Landscape Convention. Northern Ireland's Landscape Charter is second in the United Kingdom after Scotland. Whilst not government policy at present, it is anticipated that this position statement will prepare the way for policy development, possibly following Departmental reorganisation in 2016. The Landscape Charter has been described by the DOE Minister as "*a vision of hope and a call to action. It challenges us to examine our value system and to choose the correct path to manage change in our landscape.*" This Charter came at a critical time in local governance in Northern Ireland before the transfer of planning powers to new councils in April 2015.

#### **The Charter outlines ten affirmations for Northern Ireland's landscapes:**

1. Our landscapes are an essential aspect of our sense of place and belonging.
2. Our landscapes contribute to our health, well-being and quality of life.
3. Our landscapes are for all of us as part of our national and community identity.
4. Our landscapes reflect the multiplicity of our history and culture.
5. Our landscapes shall continue to inspire expression in words, sound and images.
6. Our landscapes shall continue to express who we are and have been as people.
7. Our landscapes shall continue to attract others to visit and generate wealth.
8. Our landscapes shall continue to attract individuals and businesses to locate here.
9. Our landscapes shall assist in marketing the export of our goods and services.
10. Our landscape and its management shall become an example to other nations.

1.3 To help ensure that our landscapes continue to fulfil these roles in the overall public interest, it is important in the first instance to understand these landscapes and the elements that give rise to their distinctive character.

1.4 Landscape character is the distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements that makes one area of landscape different from another. Variations in geology, soils, landform, land use, vegetation, field boundaries, settlement patterns, building styles and cultural or historical associations all combine to give rise to different landscapes, each with its own distinctive character and 'sense of place'. These differences are the product of both natural and human influences.

1.5 Landscape character assessment (LCA) involves mapping, classifying and describing these variations in landscape character. The resulting classification of the landscape can be used as a basis for making judgements about the character and condition of the landscape, and to identify how landscape character can be maintained. The RDS states that “*by understanding how places differ we can also ensure that future development is well situated, sensitive to its location and contributes to environmental, social and economic objectives*”

### The ‘Landscape Wheel’



1.6 Northern Ireland is covered by an existing LCA, published in 1999. This study was carried out at a relatively detailed scale and defined 130 separate landscape character areas each with a distinctive character, based upon local patterns of geology, land form, land use, cultural and ecological features. Descriptions of these are available on the NIEA website. [www.doeni.gov.uk/niea/landscape/country\\_landscape.htm](http://www.doeni.gov.uk/niea/landscape/country_landscape.htm) . On 28th April 2015, NIEA published for consultation a draft Northern Ireland Regional Landscape Character Assessment (NIRLCA) which covers 26 regional landscape character areas. This will form a framework for updating of local-scale assessments that could replace the NILCA 1999. The purpose of the NIRLCA is to provide an evidence base which can be used by planners, developers and the public. It will enable people to make informed decisions concerning the management of Northern Ireland’s landscapes. The NIRLCA provides a strategic view of the landscape, which can be complemented by more detailed local studies in future. It aims to draw together information on people and place, and the combinations of nature, culture and perception which make each part of Northern Ireland unique. The NIRLCA has been

developed in accordance with the general principles set out in the Natural England document '*An approach to Landscape Character (2014)*', as well as earlier guidance on the subject.

## **2.0 Regional Planning Policy Context**

2.1 The RDS 2035 aims to protect and enhance the environment for the benefit of current and future generations. It recognises that Northern Ireland's environment, including its landscapes, is one of its greatest assets which has benefits in terms of the economy and quality of life. Regional Guidance relating to landscape is largely contained within RG 11, which seeks to conserve, protect, and where possible, enhance our built heritage and our natural environment.

2.2 Within RG 11, guidelines directly relating to the protection and enhancement of landscape include the following;

- Recognise and promote the conservation of local identity and distinctive landscape character;
- Conserve, protect and where possible enhance areas recognised for their landscape quality;
- Protect designated areas of countryside from inappropriate development and continue to assess areas for designation.

2.3 Other guidelines contained within RG 11 are oriented more towards the welfare of other aspects of the natural environment, such as: (1) sustaining and the enhancing biodiversity; (2) protecting and encouraging the provision of green and blue infrastructure in urban areas; (3) protecting important geological and geomorphological features; and (4) protecting and managing of the coast. Nevertheless, appropriate application of these guidelines will be likely to have positive impacts upon the landscape.

## **3.0 Draft Strategic Planning Policy Statement & Role Of Local Development Plan**

3.1 **The draft Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS)** sets out two main roles for Local Development Plans in regard to landscape generally. Firstly, Plans should seek to promote opportunities for landscape enhancement or restoration, particularly where communities are blighted by degraded landscapes. Secondly, LDPs are required to consider the potential effects on the landscape of other Plan policies and proposals being brought forward.

3.2 With regard to the countryside, the general aim of the draft SPPS is to manage development in a manner which strikes a balance between protection of the environment from inappropriate development, while supporting and sustaining rural communities. Within this overall context, a specific objective is to conserve the landscape and natural resources of the rural area and to protect it from excessive, inappropriate or obtrusive development. The draft SPPS states that policies and proposals for the countryside should be informed by landscape assessment and environmental assets appraisal. The draft SPPS expects LDPs to contain policies to:

- require development in the countryside to integrate into its setting, respect rural character and be designed in a manner appropriate to the local area, and;
- protect areas identified in the Plan, wherein the quality of the landscape and unique amenity value is such, that development should only be permitted in exceptional circumstances.



## **4.0 Landscape Assets of Mid & East Antrim – Areas Designated For Landscape Quality**

### **4.1 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty**

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) are landscapes of national importance designated under the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (NI) Order 1985. A significant part of the Antrim Coast and Glens AONB lies within MEA Borough. The coastline of County Antrim from Ballycastle to Larne and the world famous Glens of Antrim contain some of the most beautiful and varied scenery in Northern Ireland. Designated in 1988, the AONB covers 70600 ha. The area is dominated by a high undulating plateau cut by deep glens, which open north and eastwards to the sea. It is an area of contrasts: gentle bays are separated by blunt headlands; exposed moorland gives way to sheltered valleys; wide open expanses to enclosed farmland. Slemish Mountain rises abruptly, its wildness in sharp contrast to the neat fields of the Braid Valley below. The main aim of the AONB designation is to protect and enhance the landscape quality for the benefit of those who live there and for those visitors who come to enjoy it.

## **5.0 Landscape Assets of Mid & East Antrim – Landscape Character Areas and Areas of Scenic Quality – NI landscape Character Assessment**

5.1 The Northern Ireland Landscape Character Assessment 2000 (NILCA 2000) [http://www.doeni.gov.uk/niea/landscape/country\\_landscape.htm](http://www.doeni.gov.uk/niea/landscape/country_landscape.htm) defines 130 landscape character areas (LCAs) for the whole region. Using systematic methods of assessment, it includes bespoke descriptions of each LCA to reflect its distinctive character. This is generally based upon local patterns of geology, land form, land use, cultural and ecological features. In addition the NILCA sets out principles for landscape management and accommodating new development in each of the defined areas. It also includes settlement analysis of the larger settlements.

5.2 The NILCA 2000 also identifies **Areas of Scenic Quality** and defines them as landscapes of regional or local importance for their scenic quality. They represent a second tier (below AONBs) in the hierarchy of landscape classifications. The 3 Areas of Scenic Quality are: Lower Bann Valley, Carrickfergus Escarpment and Islandmagee.

5.3 The Mid and East Antrim Borough contains 20 of the 130 Landscape Character Areas defined by NILCA, some of which are shared with neighbouring districts (See Appendix 4 Map A). It is recognised that some types of landscapes have a greater ability to absorb development than others.

5.4 On 28th April 2015, NIEA published for consultation a draft Northern Ireland Regional Landscape Character Assessment (NIRLCA)<sup>3</sup> which defines 26 regional scale landscape character areas. [http://www.doeni.gov.uk/niea/nirlca\\_introduction.pdf](http://www.doeni.gov.uk/niea/nirlca_introduction.pdf) The NIRLCA identifies broad patterns in the variation of the 26 LCAs it defines across Northern Ireland and provides a robust evidence base which will inform the management of change and the delivery of sustainable development. When published in final form it will influence a range of decisions including land use planning and development management decisions, guide policy development and designations, identify opportunities for local action, target resources and provide a mechanism for monitoring landscape changes over time.

5.5 DOE envisages that the NIRLCA will provide the context for more detailed local assessments to be brought forward by Councils in their LDPs. Notwithstanding this, the earlier NILCA still remains valid even though development in the ensuing period may have

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<sup>3</sup> NIEA anticipate that the final version will be published in July 2015



altered landscape character in some areas. Councils will therefore have to decide whether to bring forward new local LCAs or, alternatively, to rely on the original LCAs while taking due account of changes brought about by development in the past 15 years.

5.6 The Mid and East Antrim Borough contains 6, either in whole or in part, of the newly defined regional scale LCAs. The broad character of each of these areas is set out below.

5.7 **The Lough Neagh Basin (RLCA 14)** includes a very small portion of MEA Borough Council area. The most north westerly corner of the RLCA incorporates Lough Beg and land to the east towards Grange Corner. The Lough Beg environs carry international designations including a Ramsar site, a SPA and a national ASSI designation due to the overwintering bird population. The Lower Bann River outflows northward towards the Atlantic from Lough Beg. Fens, wetland and carr are common semi-natural habitats around the shores of the lough, which are often designated for their natural interest and include Lough Beg Nature Reserve. Strong recreational interest in the area, especially at Newferry, include water sports, birdwatching, fishing, cycling and walking.

5.8 **Lower Bann Valley (RLCA 15)** includes a very small portion of MEA Borough Council Area immediately north of RLCA No.14. It includes the Bann Valley between Portglenone to the north and Newferry to the south. To the east the land rises up to Long Mountain Ridge which forms a topographical boundary between the Bann Valley and the Maine Valley (RLCA 17). Today the Bann is well used for recreational boating and fishing and is an important conduit for migrating eels and salmon which are the most important economic features of the river. There are marinas at Portglenone and Newferry.

5.9 **Maine and Braid River Valleys (RLCA 17).** The majority of RLCA 17 falls within MEA Borough Council. This RLCA is formed by four river valleys; the River Maine Valley that runs north-south, which is joined by the Clough River, Braid Water and Kells Water tributaries that run off the Antrim Plateau. This LCA is contained within hills to the east, and Long Ridge Mountain to the West. The valley landscape consists of wide, open rolling farmland with drumlins which have extensive views from on top and forms a gateway to the 'Antrim Coast and Glens AONB'. The rural tranquil feel throughout the valley is interrupted by the significant road network focused on Ballymena, the largest settlement in the area. Slemish Mountain is located on the boundary of the Antrim Plateau and is a prominent outcrop which is highly visible throughout the landscape and famed for its association with St. Patrick. The scenic Ballymena Glens stretch eastwards leading towards the Garron Plateau/Antrim Plateau. Arthur Cottage near Ballymena is the ancestral home of Chester Alan Arthur, the 21<sup>st</sup> President of the USA.

5.10 **Antrim Plateau and Glens (RLCA 18).** Approximately half of this RLCA falls within MEA Borough stretching from Garron Point to Larne with the southern boundary formed by the Six Mile Water valley (RLCA 19). Glenarm and Glencloy of the nine Glens of Antrim fall within MEA. This RLCA incorporates several types of landscape ranging from dramatic coastal cliffs and tranquil bays, to scenic, intimate glens once remote, exposed and generally undeveloped uplands of the Antrim Plateau mainly used for sheep farming. Settlement is concentrated along the coast, in the bays between headlands where the soil is more fertile. The main road, the A2, broadly follows the coast with other major roads crossing the plateau where the valleys cut through. The plateau is a large scale sweeping landform, generally heath covered with several distinctive areas, including the semi-natural habitats of upland found on Garron Plateau, the forested areas of Ballyboley and the open and exposed areas of Elliott's Hill with its large scale wind energy development. Much of Garron Plateau is designated a SAC, Ramsar and ASSI for the largest area of intact upland blanket bog in Northern Ireland. Rare bird species such as the Hen Harrier and Golden Plover can be

sighted here. Bronze aged sites exist near Ballygally and its castle dates from the plantation period and has been in continuous use for over 400 years. Limestone quarrying was previously important at Carnlough and still continues today in Glenarm and Kilwaughter. Iron and bauxite ores were mined at Glenravel, evidenced by the dense network of disused narrow gauge railway lines, spoil heaps and other mining infrastructure still visible in the landscape today. The area is popular with tourists attracted by the natural beauty and outdoor recreational opportunities such as the Ulster Way and Carnfunnock Country Park. There is a rich history of folklore and Irish mythology with place names like Feystown (town of the fairies). The area has a strong tradition of storytelling and song and the area has attracted many artists both local and from further afield.

**5.11 South Antrim Hills and Six Mile Water (RLCA 19).** An area from Larne Lough to Ballynure and from Ballyboley forest to Woodburn forest forms the extent of land in this RLCA which falls within MEA Borough. The South Antrim Hills are located to the north of Belfast and south of the Antrim Plateau, with the Six Mile Water flowing in between. This river rises at Shane's Hill to the west of Larne and flows westwards towards Lough Neagh. Angling for Brown Trout and Salmon in Six Mile Water is a popular recreational activity. The valley rises northwards towards the Antrim Plateau. These uplands display distinctive rocky outcrops among the uneven field pattern with pastures being replaced by woodland on the lower slopes, increasingly to the east. Extensive state managed conifer forests such as Ballyboley which lies on the edge of Agnew's Hill, are important economically and also for their recreational and amenity value. There are occasional reservoirs and small loughs amongst the hills, often associated with these forests. Communication masts on hilltop sites along with pylons and electricity lines crossing the area, can detract from the remote, undeveloped feel of the highest uplands. There are number of single turbines across the hills. The development of numerous turbines may have combined impacts which become more pervasive than larger wind farms. The areas is also overlooked by windfarms to the north on Elliot's Hill. The war memorial monument at Knockagh on the boundary of this RLCA is a prominent landmark.

**5.12 Belfast Lough and Islandmagee (RLCA 20).** This RLCA forms the transition from the sea to the upland areas of the South Antrim Hills and the Six Mile Water to the north. The extent of land in the MEA borough which falls within this RLCA stretches from Larne and Islandmagee, through Whitehead and Carrickfergus to Greenisland. This area is part of the eastern coastline of Northern Ireland which in this RLCA is marked by the shores and hill slopes of the Belfast Lough valley; the undulating basalt ridges on both sides of Larne Lough, and cliffs along the eastern shore of the Islandmagee peninsula which . There are a mix of coastal habitats, from tidal flats within Larne Lough to cliffs and wave cut platforms near the Gobbins. Larne Lough is designated a SPA, ASSI and Ramsar site.

Settlement is focussed at Larne, at the mouth of the Larne Lough. Nearby there is a power station at Ballylumford and an old limestone quarry at Magheramorne. A prominent line of pylons also crosses the area from Ballylumford, down through Islandmagee to Carrickfergus. The stack of Kilroot power station just north of Carrickfergus forms a clear landmark in many views. Carrickfergus Castle also forms a landmark though less visible from a distance. An imposing Norman Castle, it was besieged in turn by the Scots, Irish, English and French. The castle played an important military role until 1928 and remains one of the best preserved medieval structures in Ireland.

## **6.0 Landscape Assets of Mid & East Antrim – Existing Development Plan Landscape Designations.**

**6.1 Countryside Policies and Designations** - Countryside Policy Areas (CPA's) were designated by the Department under policy GB/CPA 1 of the Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland (PSRNI) to protect areas of countryside under pressure from development; the visual amenity of areas of landscape quality and to maintain the rural character of the countryside.

The Larne Area Plan 2010 designated the coastal land between Larne and Garron Point as the 'Undeveloped Coast CPA' in recognition of its significant landscape and amenity value and vulnerability to development pressure. (Appendix 4 Map 4B) This policy only permits development that is of such national or regional importance as to outweigh any potential detrimental impact to the coastal environment and where no feasible alternative site existed within the urban area. Following publication of PPS21 – 'Sustainable Development in the Countryside' in 2010, new policy provisions took precedence over Countryside Policy Areas (CPA) designated in existing statutory Area Plans. However the Undeveloped Coast CPA as identified in the Larne Area Plan 2010 was one of 5 exceptions throughout Northern Ireland where the original Area Plan CPA policies are retained. These designations are now changed in title to Special Countryside Areas – PPS21 refers.

- The Belfast Metropolitan Area coastline extends for approximately 80 kms from Blackhead Cliffs in the former Carrickfergus Borough to beyond Ballymacormick Point in North Down and is protected by the BMA Coastal Area designation (COU 2) as designated in BMAP 2016, (Appendix 4, Map No. 4C). Within MEA Borough it includes all coastal areas, with the exception of the Urban Waterfront at Carrickfergus. The Policy only allows planning permission to be granted where development proposals are of such national or regional importance as to outweigh any detrimental impact on the coastal environment; or it can be demonstrated that any proposal will not harm the qualities of the coastal landscape, while still protecting nature conservation value.

**6.2 Areas of Constraint on Mineral Development (ACMD)** designated in Development Plans identify areas to be protected from mineral development because of their intrinsic landscape, amenity, scientific or heritage value (including natural, built and archaeological heritage). Whilst there is a general presumption against mineral development in such areas, any review of extensive designations in the emerging Plan should carefully consider the scope for some mineral development that avoids key sites and that would not unduly compromise the integrity of the area as a whole (e.g. AONB), or threaten to undermine the rationale for the designation.

**6.3** The only existing Area of Constraint on Mineral Development in the borough is designated in the Larne Area Plan 2010 and incorporates the Special Countryside Area along the Coast Road, in the Glens and that portion of the Garron Plateau which is included in the Antrim Coast and Glens AONB (Appendix 4 map 4B). It should be noted that there are no Areas of Constraint on Mineral Development designated in the extant Ballymena Area Plan 1986 -2001 as this type of designation was introduced after that area plan was adopted. The Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP) does not include any ACMD designations within the former Carrickfergus Borough Council area.

**6.4 Rural Landscape Wedges-** The RDS seeks to protect and enhance the network of open spaces in the BMUA, through a network "consisting of country parks, landscape

wedges, parks and community greenways". Rural Landscape Wedges are seen as contributing to this green network and have a particular role in preventing the coalescence of separate urban areas so as to help maintain their distinctive identities. The following landscape wedges fall within the MEA Borough and are designated in BMAP 2016 (Appendix 4, Map No.4C).

- Rural Landscape Wedge (CE 03 in BMAP) is designated to the west of Greenisland between Jordanstown, Metropolitan Newtownabbey and Greenisland to distinguish and maintain the separate identities of these 3 areas, preventing their merging. Though it also provides an important element in defining and protecting the setting of Greenisland and Metropolitan Newtownabbey.
- CE 04 is designated between Carrickfergus and Greenisland to distinguish and maintain their separate identities by forming a visual break between the two settlements; prevent the merging of the two communities; provide an important element in defining and protecting the setting of Carrickfergus and Greenisland; maintain the rural character of the countryside; and protect the identity and setting of the small settlement of Trooperslane adjacent to Carrickfergus.

**6.5 Areas of High Scenic Value-** the RDS aims to protect and enhance the setting of the BMUA and its environmental assets (SFG5). It refers to the significant natural setting surrounded by hills, and the importance of protecting areas of high scenic value from development.

Areas of High Scenic Value (AOHSV) are designated to protect the setting of the Metropolitan Urban Area and other areas of particular landscape merit. Within the MEA Borough AOHSV's are designated at Carrickfergus Escarpment and Island Magee (Appendix 4, Map No.4C).

**6.6 Local Landscape Policy Areas (LLPA's)-** LLPAs are designated by Development Plans in accordance with PPS6 – 'Planning, Archaeology and the Built Heritage', to help protect those areas within and/or adjoining settlements which are considered to be of greatest amenity value, landscape quality or local significance and are therefore worthy of protection from undesirable or damaging development. They can include archaeological sites and monuments and their surroundings, listed and other locally important buildings and their surroundings, river banks and shore lines and associated public access and attractive vistas, localised hills and other areas of local amenity importance.

**6.7** BMAP designated 16 LLPA's within the former Carrickfergus Borough Council Area. These are distributed across the settlements of Carrickfergus, Greenisland and Whitehead. It should be noted however that there are no LLPA's designated in the extant Ballymena or Larne Area Plans as these types of designations were introduced after those plans were adopted. ((Appendix 4, Map No.4D, shows an example of an LLPA in Greenisland).

**6.8** The following link to the Carrickfergus Countryside Map No.1 (Part 4 Volume 4 of BMAP 2016) shows the BMA Coastal Area, Rural Landscape Wedges, Areas of High Scenic Value and LLPA's designated within the former Carrickfergus Borough.

## **7.0 Conclusions and Recommendation**

7.1 This paper outlines the regional planning policy context and explains the role of the LDP in sustaining the rich and diverse landscape assets of the borough. This paper has described the range of environmental assets, both built and natural which are to be found within our council area. The paper also provides an overview of landscape quality and character which can be used in the preparation of the LDP to help inform policy concerning the protection and management of the boroughs landscapes. This information will be supplemented by additional studies, as necessary.

7.2 It has set out the statutory obligations which a local authority must meet when preparing a local development plan. The local development plan will need to balance development with the protection of the environmental and landscape assets already identified at international, national and regional level. The LDP will bring forward policies or proposals for the protection, conservation and enhancement of the natural and built heritage.

7.4 It is recommended that the Planning Committee notes this summary and the legal requirements for the protection of the various assets as part of the plan preparation process.

## **8.0 APPENDICES**

APPENDIX 1: NATURAL HERITAGE LEGISLATION

APPENDIX 2A: NATURAL HERITAGE STATUTORY DESIGNATIONS

APPENDIX 2B: BUILT HERITAGE STATUTORY DESIGNATIONS

APPENDIX 2C: OTHER DESIGNATIONS

APPENDIX 3: MAPS

MAP 3A: SITES OF INTERNATIONAL NATURE CONSERVATION IMPORTANCE

MAP 3B: SITES OF NATIONAL NATURE CONSERVATION IMPORTANCE

MAP 3C: HISTORIC SITES & MONUMENTS

APPENDIX 4: LANDSCAPE MAPS

MAP 4A: LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS 2000

MAP4B: LARNE AREA PLAN 2010

- UNDEVELOPED COAST CPA
- AREAS OF CONSTRAINT ON MINERAL DEVELOPMENT

MAP 4C: BMAP 2016

- BMA COASTAL AREA
- RURAL LANDSCAPE WEDGES
- AREAS OF HIGH SCENIC VALUE

MAP 4D: BMAP 2016 – EXAMPLE OF LOCAL LANDSCAPE POLICY AREA

## **APPENDIX 1 Natural Heritage Legislative Context**

**(a) European Legislation** - The relevant European statutory framework is as follows:

- The Birds Directive - 1979 EC Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds.
- Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive – 1985
- The Habitats Directive - 1992 EC Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora.
- Water Framework Directive – 2000
- Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive 2001
- Marine Strategy Framework Directive – 2008

### **European Designations / International Conventions**

The relevant European / International designated sites arising from the above legislation are as follows:

- European sites - Special Protection Areas (SPA's)
- European sites – Special Areas of Conservation (SAC's)
- Global networks – Ramsars

**(b) National Legislation** - The relevant UK and NI legislation for transposing EC Directives in relation to natural heritage is as follows:

- The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 ('Conservation Regulations') transpose the requirements of the EC 'Habitats' Directive and aspects of the 'Wild Birds' Directive into domestic legislation
- The Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 apply the EIA Directive to the planning process in Northern Ireland.
- The Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) Regulations (NI) 2003 transposes the Water Framework Directive.
- The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (NI) 2004 transpose the SEA Directive into NI legislation
- The UK Marine Strategy Regulations 2010 transposes the Marine Strategy Framework Directive into UK legislation.

**(c) Other relevant NI legislation is as follows:**

- The Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (NI) Order 1985
- The Environment (NI) Order 2002 – for designating ASSI's
- The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009
- The Planning Act (NI) 2011
- The Wildlife and Natural Environment (NI) Act 2011
- The Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013
- The Planning (Local Development Plans) Regulations (NI) 2015

- The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2015 (These regulations allow councils to undertake environmental assessments for relevant planning applications within EU designated sites)



## **APPENDIX 2A: STATUTORY DESIGNATIONS - NATURAL HERITAGE**

### **2A (i) Sites of International Importance**

#### **Ramsar Sites**

The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, requires Contracting Parties to designate suitable wetlands for inclusion in the Ramsar List. As a Contracting Party to the Convention, the UK is required to designate wetlands in accordance with criteria agreed by these parties for inclusion in a list of “Wetlands of International Importance”. The delegate countries were concerned with wetland and waterfowl conservation and the objectives are to stem the progressive encroachment on and loss of wetlands, both now and in the future, and to encourage a wise use of wetlands. A wetland is defined as being an area of marsh, fen, peatland or water, whether natural, or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt and including areas of intertidal marine water.

There are **4** Ramsar designated within Mid and East Antrim Borough Council area.

[Lough Neagh and Lough Beg](#)

[Garron Platform](#)

[Larne Lough](#)

[Belfast Lough](#)

#### **Special Protection Areas (SPA's)**

Special Protection Areas (SPA's) are designated under the European Commission Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC) (The Birds Directive). All European Community member States are required to identify internationally important areas for breeding, overwintering and migrating birds and designate them as Special Protection Areas (SPAs). The United Kingdom practice is to protect these areas under domestic legislation before classifying them as SPAs. The Birds Directive is implemented in Northern Ireland through the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995. There are **5** SPAs within Mid and East Antrim Borough Council area:

- [Antrim Hills](#)
- [Belfast Lough Open Water](#)
- [Belfast Lough](#)
- [Larne Lough](#)
- [Lough Neagh and Lough Beg](#)

#### **Special Areas of Conservation (SAC's)**

The EC Council Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Fauna and Flora (92/43/EEC) (The Habitats Directive) requires member states to designate Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), to protect some of the rarest or seriously threatened habitats and species in a European context and take measures to maintain and restore them. The Directive identifies those habitats and species at greatest risk as priority habitats or species, and member States must provide for their declaration as SACs. The Habitats Directive is implemented in Northern Ireland through the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995. There are currently **3** SACs within Mid and East Antrim Borough area:

- [Garron Plateau](#)
- [Main Valley Bogs](#)
- [The Maidens \(off shore\)](#)

Classified SPAs and SACs together form the European wide network of sites known as 'Natura 2000'.

## 2A (ii) Sites of National Importance

**National Nature Reserves** - A nature reserve is defined as an area of importance for flora, fauna or features of geological or other special interest, which are reserved and managed for conservation and to provide special opportunities for study or research. Environment and Heritage Service declares National Nature Reserves under the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Northern Ireland) Order 1985. Sites of national and sometimes international importance are usually managed by the Department's Northern Ireland Environment Agency or by agreement with a voluntary conservation body. There are **4** National Nature Reserves within Mid and East Antrim Borough Council area:

- [Straidkilly](#)
- [Lough Neagh Islands](#)
- [Lough Beg](#)
- [Swan Island](#)

## Areas of Special Scientific Interest.

There are 36 Areas of Special Scientific Interest designated under the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands Order 1985 within the Plan area either in whole or part, which are listed as follows. Areas of Special Scientific Interest are areas of land that have been identified by scientific survey as being of the highest degree of conservation value by reason of any of their flora, fauna and geological or physiographical features. ASSI's have a well-defined boundary and by and large remain in private ownership. The underlying philosophy is to achieve conservation by co-operation with landowners who receive a list of notifiable operations which the Department considers might harm the nature conservation interest of the site and may therefore require a management agreement (For Map See Appendix 3B).

## ASSI's in Mid and East Antrim Borough Council

1 Ballycarry	19 Kilcoan
2 Ballygalley Head	20 Knock Dhu and Sallagh Braes
3 Blackburn	21 Larne Lough
4 Carneal	22 Lemnalary
5 Castletown	23 Linford
6 Cleggan Valley	24 Little Deer Park
7 Copeland Reservoir	25 Lough Beg
8 Cranny Falls	26 Minnis
9 Culnafay	27 Newlands
10 Feystown	28 North Woodburn Glen
11 Galboly	29 North Woodburn Reservoir
12 Frosses	30 Outer Belfast Lough
13 Garron Meadow	31 Portmuck
14 Glarryford	32 Rathsherry
15 Glenarm Woods	33 Scawt Hill
16 Glenarm Woods (Part 2)	34 The Gobbins

17 Glen Burn	35 The Maidens
18 Gortnagory	36 Waterloo

## Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

AONB's are designated by the Department primarily for their high landscape quality, wildlife importance and rich cultural and architectural heritage under the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (NI) Order 1985 (NCALO). The Department can also designate a National Park under this legislation. There is **1** AONB which partly lies partly within Mid and East Antrim Borough Council to protect the scenic quality of the landscape and the heritage of dwellings built by past generations.

[Antrim Coast and Glens AONB](#)

### 2a (iii) Sites of Local Importance Local Nature Reserves

Local Nature Reserves, or LNRs for short, are areas that have been specially set aside for biodiversity and where people can enjoy wildlife. Many LNRs lie within, or close to, urban areas. Declaring a site as a LNR is a visible sign of a local authority's commitment to protecting biodiversity. Often designation is linked to actions and targets within a council's Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP).

There are **3** local nature reserves within MEA:

- [Clements wood](#)
- [Cranny Falls](#)
- [Carrickfergus](#)

### Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance

Areas of conservation, archaeological, scientific, landscape or amenity importance or interest within the natural environment can be protected through the designation of Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance (**SLNCIs**) and Local Landscape Policy Areas (**LLPA's** to be addressed in the Landscape section later). SLNCLI's are of local nature conservation importance on the basis of their flora, fauna or earth science conservation importance. There are **23** SLNCLI's designated in line with the the Natural Environment strategy in part 3, Volume 1 for the former Carrickfergus council area of the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan. The LDP will reassess this strategy and examine the need for additional SLNCLI's throughout the remainder of Mid and East Antrim Borough Council area.

Antrim Coast Blackhead to Whitehead	Knockagh - Dorisland
Ardboley	Lough Mourne
Blackhead (Geodiversity)	North Woodburn Reservoir Site
Castle Dobbs	Oakfield
Coast North and South of Cloughen Point	Slimero
Carrickfergus Castle	Slimero Mountain
Copeland Reservoir	South Woodburn
Dalways Bawn	West of Mutton Burn
Jointure Bay Stream	Whitehead (Geodiversity)

## **APPENDIX 2B: STATUTORY DESIGNATIONS - BUILT HERITAGE 2B**

### **Archaeological Sites and Monuments State Care Sites**

Archaeological sites and monuments are taken into the care of the department under the Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects (Northern Ireland) Order 1995. State care sites and monuments represent all periods of human settlement in Ireland from 8000 BC to the 20th century. They are protected and managed as a public asset by the NIEA. All are presented for public access, education and enjoyment. There are **7** state care sites within Mid and East Antrim Borough.

### **Scheduled Monuments**

The Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 provides protection for archaeological sites and monuments. There are over **155** of these 'scheduled' monuments located within Mid and East Antrim Borough.

### **Unscheduled Monuments**

There are **1294** other recorded archaeological sites and monuments within the council area. The Northern Ireland Sites and Monuments Record is held and updated by Northern Ireland Environment Agency and is available to the public.

### **Listed Buildings**

Article 42 of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 requires the department to compile a list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest, important for their value and contribution to the character and quality of settlements and the countryside. The process of listing and reviewing is constantly ongoing. On 27<sup>th</sup> May 2015, there were **692** listed buildings / structures within the new council area of which 20 were of Grade 'A' status. Built Heritage section of the NIEA should be contacted for more detailed and up to date information: <http://www.doeni.gov.uk/niea/>

### **Conservation Areas**

The Planning (NI) Order 1991 (Article 50) provides the Department with the power to designate an area of special architectural or historic interest as a Conservation Area. Within the new council area there are **5** Conservation Areas. These are [Carrickfergus](#), [Carnlough](#), [Glenarm](#), [Gracehill](#) and [Whitehead](#).

Individual townscape and design advice is given in the relevant designation booklets.

## APPENDIX 2C: OTHER STATUTORY DESIGNATIONS

### Areas of Townscape or Village Character (ATC/AVC)

Areas of Townscape Character (ATC's) including Areas of Village Character are designated by the Department through development plans with accompanying local policies for the control of development within these areas. There are currently 2 ATCs located within Mid and East Antrim Borough:

- [Shore Road, Greenisland](#)
- [Belfast Road, Carrickfergus](#)

### Areas of Significant Archaeological Interest

[Knockdhu](#) in Larne is designated as an Area of Significant Archaeological Interest. The designation of the overall setting in which a number of individual and related monuments are located, or an area of historic landscape, as an Area of Significant Archaeological Interest, is intended to protect the individual sites or monuments and their settings and the essential character of the area from inappropriate development. Knockdhu, (from Irish Cnoc Dubh, meaning "black hill") is a Bronze Age promontory fort and settlement situated approximately one mile to the west of Cairncastle. The site consists of a set of three banks and ditches, Bronze Age roundhouses, and a probable gatehouse and is unique in Northern Ireland.

### Areas of Archaeological Potential

PPS 6 indicates that where it is likely that archaeological remains will be encountered in the course of continuing development and change, such areas will be highlighted in development plans. These areas are referred to as Areas of Archaeological Potential and will be identified in the Plan. There are 3 Areas of Archaeological Potential in the Borough. Currently, these comprise the historic cores of [Ballycarry](#), [Carrickfergus](#) and [Whitehead](#). They indicate to developers those areas, that on the basis of current knowledge, it is likely that archaeological remains will be encountered in the course of future development or change. Planning Policy for the control of development is contained in PPS 6.

### Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesnes

The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) has prepared a register of parks, gardens and demesnes of special historic interest in Northern Ireland. There are currently 12 registered historic parks, gardens and demesnes within the council area and 8 supplementary entries. All sites are detailed as follows:

#### Registered

[Castle Dobbs](#), [Red Hall](#), [Maghermourne House \(Hotel\)](#), [Galgorm Castle](#), [Drumalis](#), [Chaine Park](#), [People's Park](#), [Ballymena](#), [Carnfunnock Country Park](#), [Hill Mount](#), [Glenarm Castle](#), [Drumnasole](#) and [Kilwaughter Castle](#).

#### Supplementary

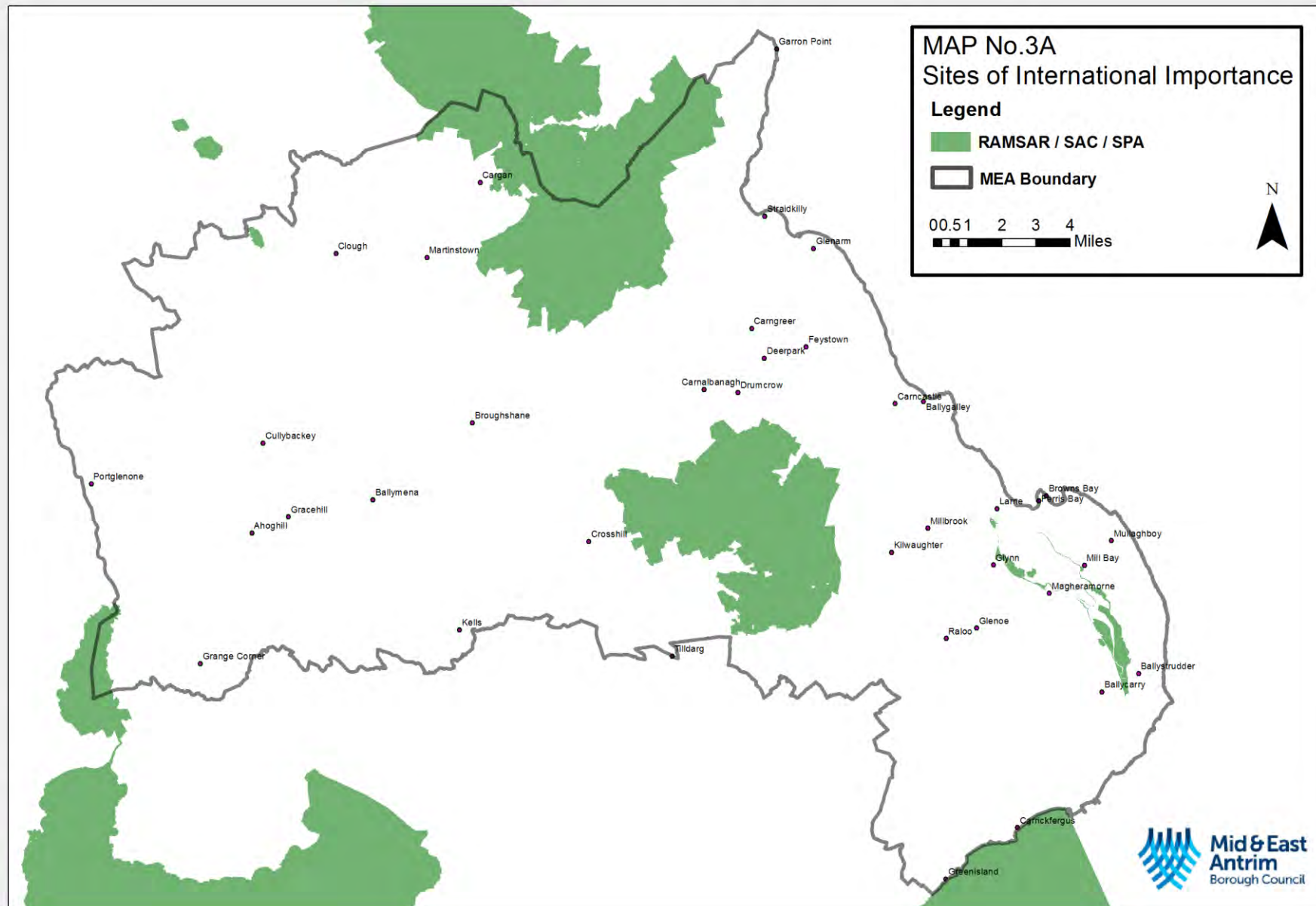
[Sea Park](#), [Garron Tower](#), [Cleggan Lodge](#), [Craigdun](#), [Glebe House](#), [Portglenone House](#), [Cottage](#) and [Cairndhu](#).

### **Industrial and Defence Heritage**

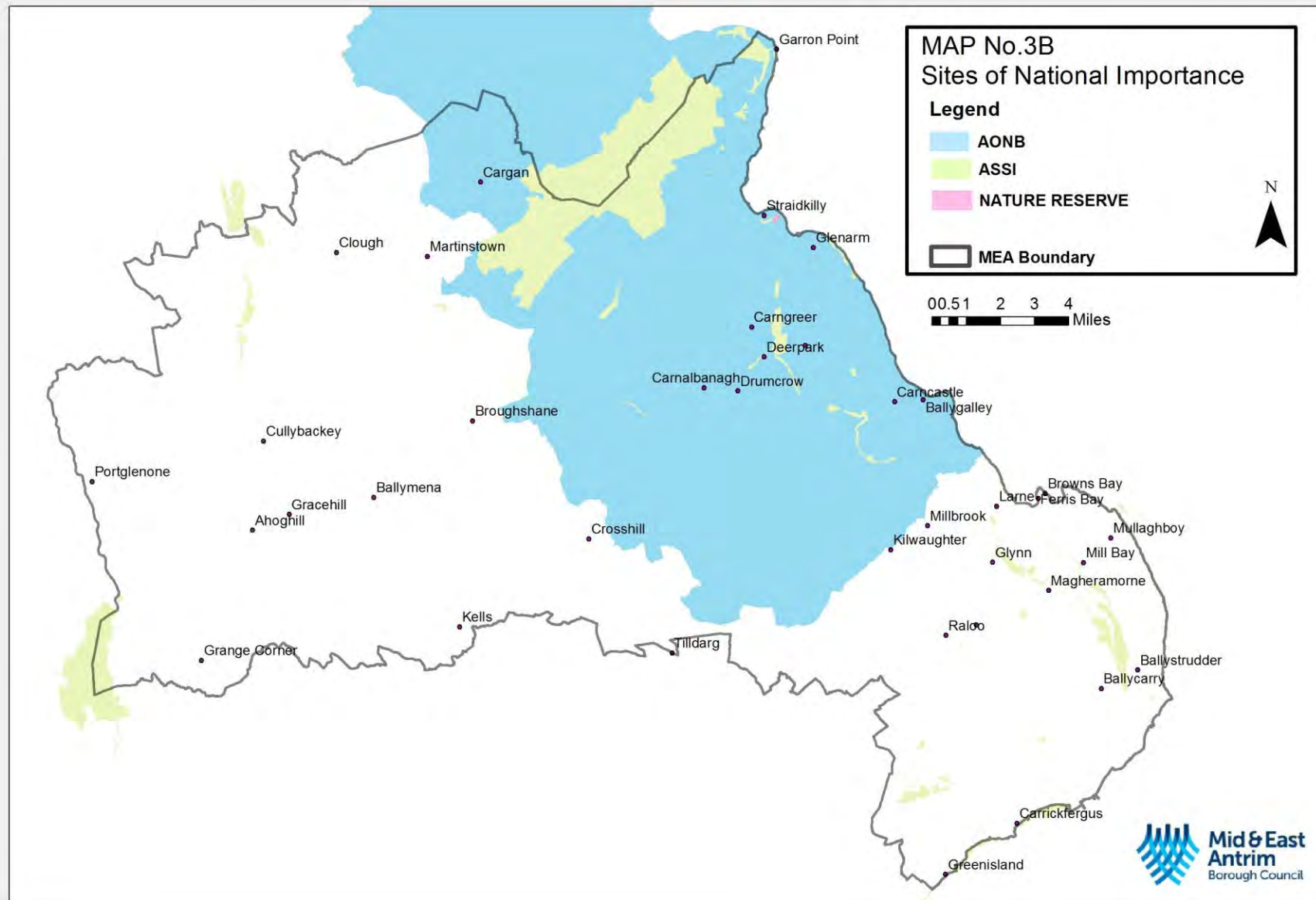
Mid and East Antrim Borough area contains a wealth of remains of industrial and defence heritage, all of which are reminders of both the economic and military past. The Northern Ireland Environment Agency record and update data containing industrial heritage. Industrial heritage sites would include former mills, factories, bridges and railway fixtures, whilst defence heritage would include a heavy anti-aircraft batteries, air raid shelters and a number of observation posts.

The Industrial and Defence Heritage Record is included in the Department's Monument's and Buildings Record (MBR), and this map based archive can be accessed by the public through Built Heritage, (NIEA) 5-33 Hill Street, Belfast BT1 2LA.

**APPENDIX 3**



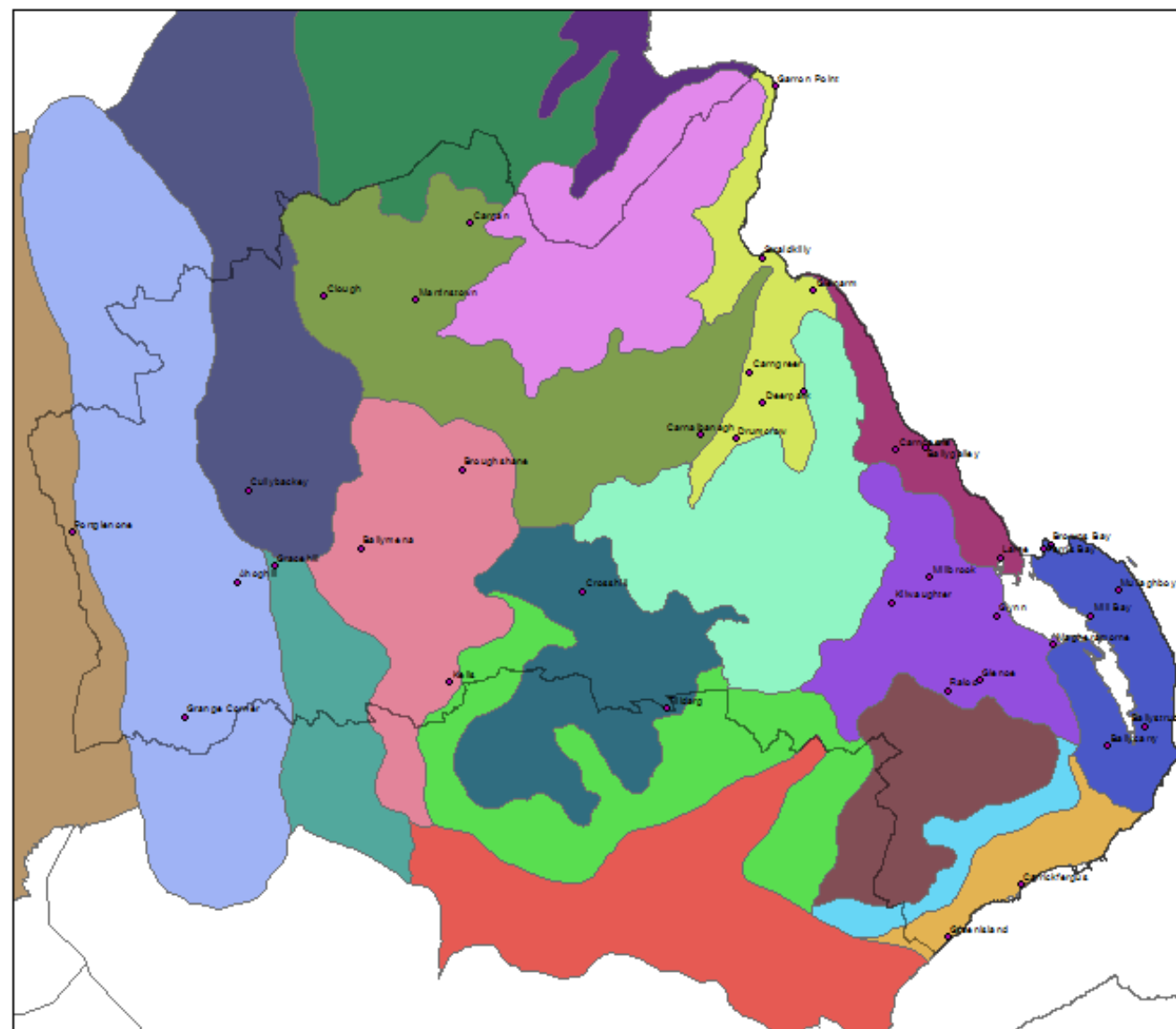






## APPENDIX 4:

**MAP 4A: MID AND EAST ANTRIM LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS (NILCA 2000)**



**Legend**

**NIEA Landscape Character Areas**

**LCA NAME**

- Ballymena Farmland
- Carrickfergus Farmed Escarpment
- Carrickfergus Shoreline
- Carrickfergus Upland Pastures
- Central Ballymena Glens
- Cullybackey and Clogh Mills Drumlins
- Garron Plateau
- Island Magee
- Larne Basalt Moorland
- Larne Coast
- Larne Glens
- Larne Ridgeland
- Long Mountain Ridge
- Lower Bann Valley
- Moyle Glens
- Moyle Moorlands and Forest
- River Main Valley
- Tandree Upland Pastures
- Tandree and Six Mile Water Slopes
- Three and Six Mile Water Valleys



**Mid & East  
Antrim**  
Borough Council

0 0.5 1 2 3 4  
Miles











Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015

## MAP No. 4C

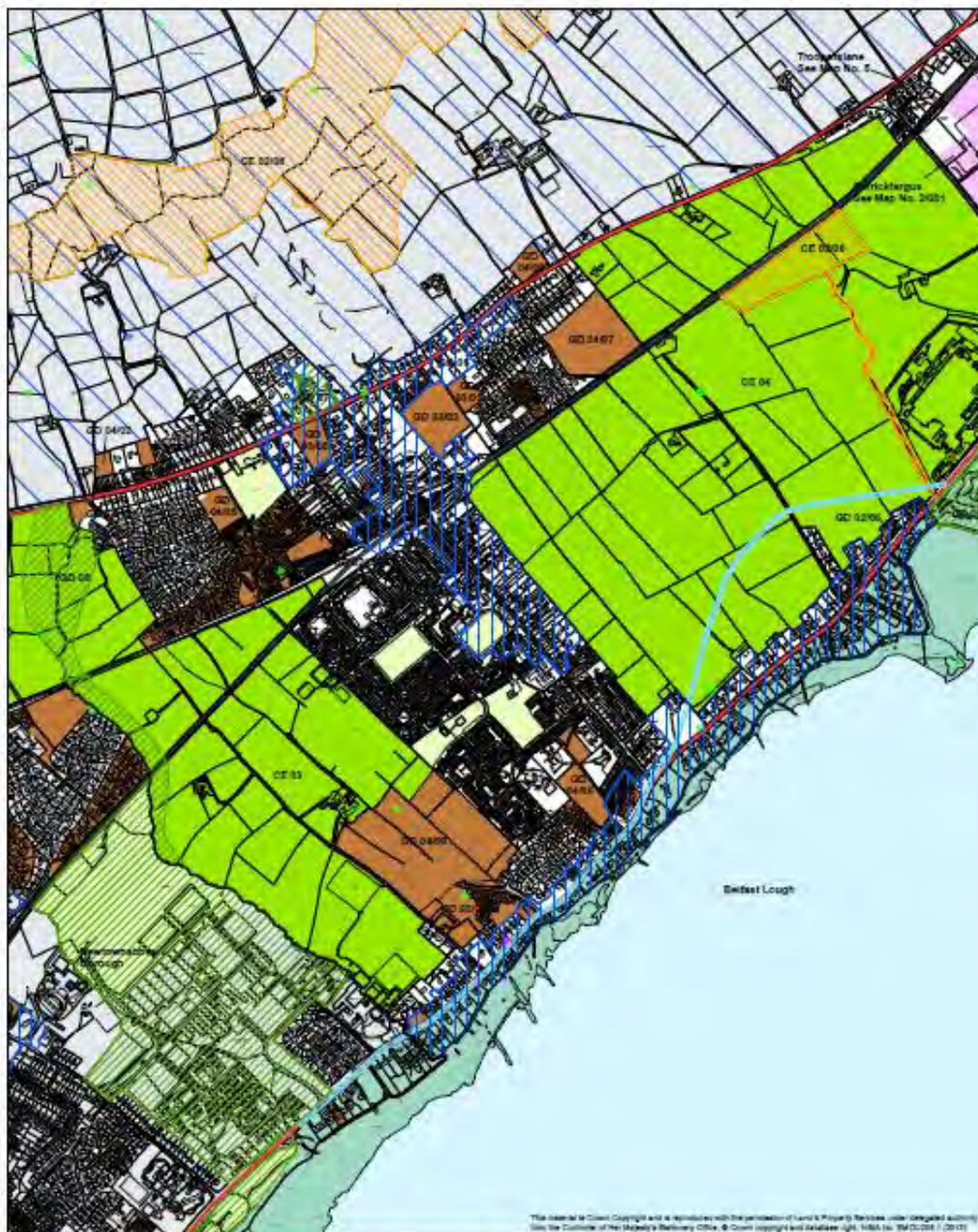
- Plan Area Delimited (Refer to adjacent Settlement Map)
- Rural Landscape Wedge
- Area of High Scenic Value
- Area of Bad Reservoir (CE 05)
- Area of Potential Scenic Interest
- BMA Coastal Area
- Local Landscape Priority Area
- Site of Local Nature Conservation Importance
- Urban Wetlands (CE 24)
- Historic Park, Garden and Demesne (CE 27)
- Road Proposal

### For Information Only:

- Protected Route
- Archaeological Site & Monument (State/Care)
- Archaeological Site & Monument (Controlled)
- Archaeological Site & Monument (Unscheduled)







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Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015

# **MAP No. 4D**

- Council Boundary
- Settlement Development Limit
- Land zoned for Housing
- Area of Townscape Character
- Local Landscape Policy Area
- Land zoned as Existing Employment
- Site of Local Nature Conservation Importance
- Rural Landscape Wedge
- Area of High Scenic Value
- BMA Coastal Area

## **For Information Only**

- Area of Existing Open Space
- Protected Route
- A2 Road Proposal (indicative line)
- Archaeological Site and Monument (State Care)
- Archaeological Site and Monument (Scheduled)
- Archaeological Site and Monument (Unscheduled)

See Carrickfergus Countryside Proposals for details of SINCI Designations CE 02/06 and CE 03/06, and Rural Landscape Wedge Designations CE 03 and CE 04 and Countryside and Coast Proposals, Volume 1 of the Plan, for details of ANSV Designation COU 05/02.

