



IUCN Peatland Conference Country Update: Northern Ireland

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Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy



- Peatland Conservation, Restoration & Management
- Policy Alignment
- Capacity Building & Research
- Knowledge Sharing, Communication & Access
- Governance, Implementation & Funding

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NI Peatland Strategy Update



- Ongoing consultation on Equality Impact Assessment – ends 4th November
- Aim to publish Peatland Strategy towards end of 2022
- Peatland Strategy commits us to taking forward the CCC recommendations
 - ❖ 150,000 ha by 2050
 - ❖ 7,500 ha per year until 2035

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Policy Landscape

Relevant DAERA policies and strategies

Environment Strategy

Green Growth Strategy

Climate Change Act

Climate Action Plans

Ammonia Strategy

Agricultural Policy

30x30

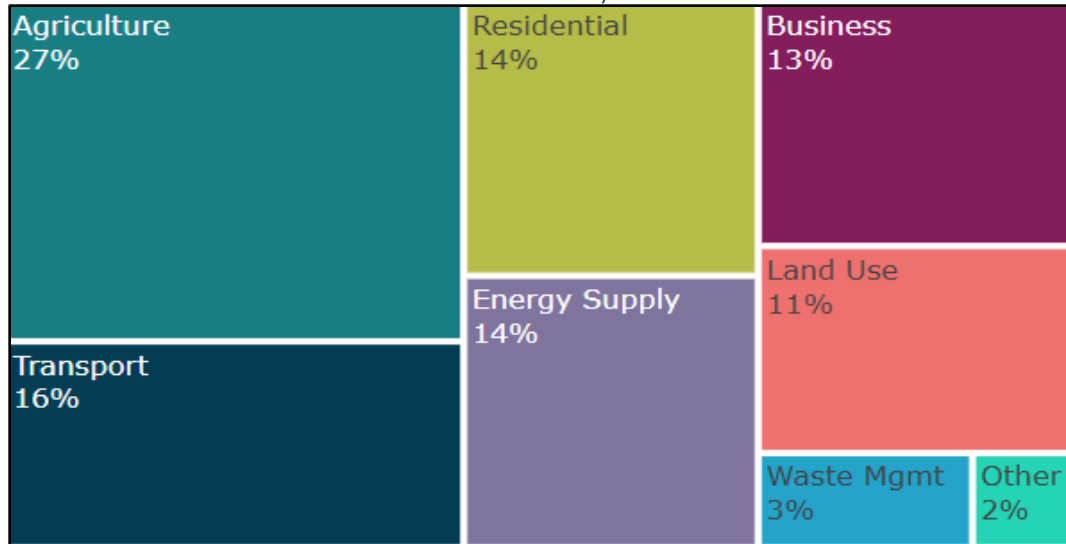
Soil Nutrient Health Scheme

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Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022

- Net Zero Greenhouse Gas Emissions reduction target by 2050
- Interim target of at least 48% lower than the baseline by 2030

Sectoral contributions to NI GHG emission, 2020

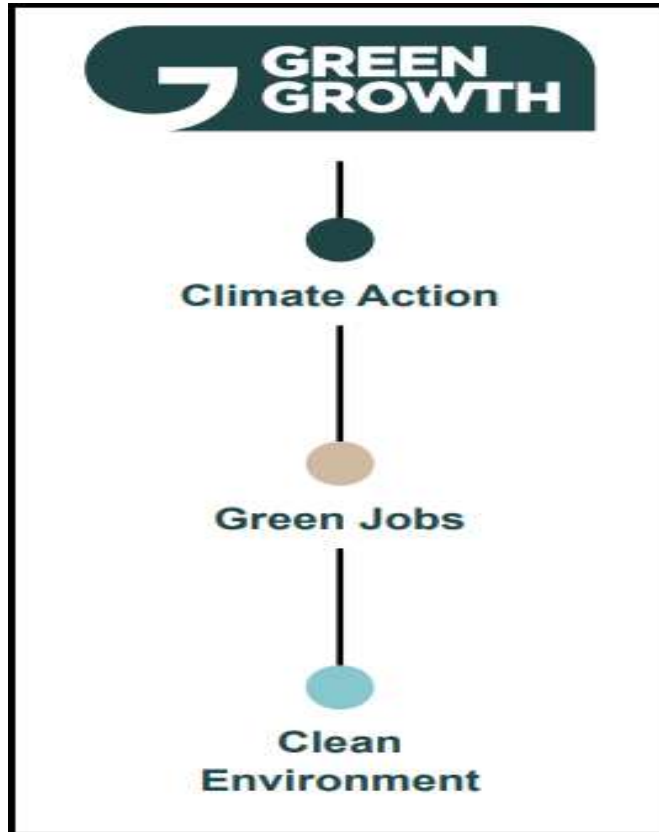


Climate Action Plans

- Key delivery vehicle for meeting carbon budgets
 - First 5-year plan by the end of 2023
- Will include:
- policies and proposals from all NI departments
 - annual GHG and air quality targets
 - soil quality and biodiversity targets
 - desirability of using nature-based projects
 - Just Transition

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Green Growth Strategy

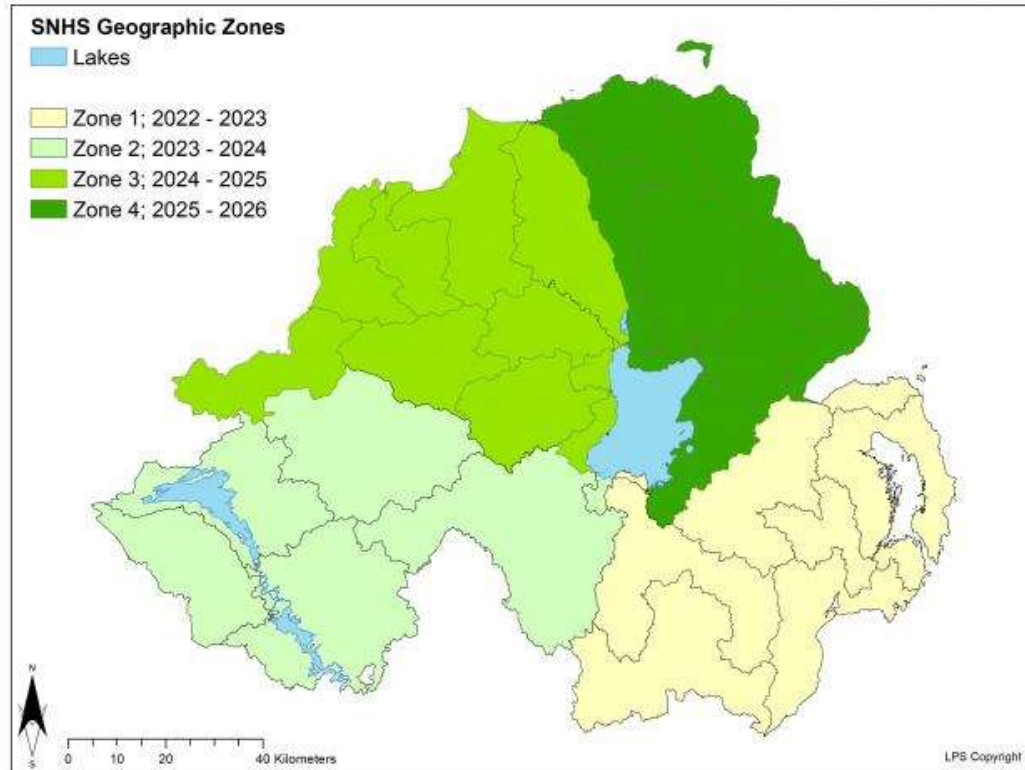


Aim: Moving from a high to a low greenhouse gas emissions economy

- Climate Action
 - Decarbonisation
 - Sustainable Consumption & Production
- Clean Environment
 - Clean Air and Water
 - Biodiversity Protection and Enhancement
- Green Jobs
 - Circular Economy
 - Skills and Training

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Soil Nutrient Health Scheme



- Innovative scheme rolling out to farms across NI over the next four years. Budget of up to £45m
- Aims to verifiably establish baselines of:
 - Key soil nutrients at individual field level
 - Carbon stock estimates in soils and AGB (primarily hedgerows & trees)
- LiDAR scan of the entire land area of NI will be carried out to assist in:
 - The hydrological mapping of NI's water catchments
 - The estimation of Above Ground Biomass carbon stocks

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Concluding Projects 2022

Collaborative Action for the Natura Network (CANN)



- 13 SAC habitat maps produced
- 12 draft SAC Management Plans
- Conservation actions on approx. 2500ha which includes peatland and wetland habitats

Co-operation Across Borders for Biodiversity (CABB)



- 3 SAC habitat maps produced
- 3 draft SAC Management Plans
- Conservation actions on approx. 500ha which includes peatland and wetland habitats.

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Site pre – restoration starting October 2020



145 cell bunds (6 ha)
237 peat dams inserted every 10-12m (16 ha)



Disclaimer
The views and opinions expressed in this presentation do not necessarily reflect those of the European Commission or the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB).

Restoration of over 20 hectares of peatbog that was previously planted with Lodgepole pine using a new method for formerly afforested areas called cell bunding as well as drain blocking with peat dams on the site. Also trialled *Sphagnum* seeding on 1 Ha. of cell bunds.



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Future and ongoing projects

- Development of **restoration opportunity maps** for peatland restoration in N.I. Phase II delivery March 2023 (UW/JHI)
- **NI Peat Flux Network** – 4 Eddy-Covariance flux towers, establishing a monitoring network across a gradient of peatland condition and management conditions specific to NI peatlands (CEH)
- Exploration of the application of the **Peatland Code in N.I.** (RSPB)
- Enhancing **Peatland Habitat Management and Skills** - The Conservation Volunteers (TCV)
- **Habitat Restoration, development of managements plans, scoping future projects and capacity building** (Mid and East Antrim Borough Council, and UW)

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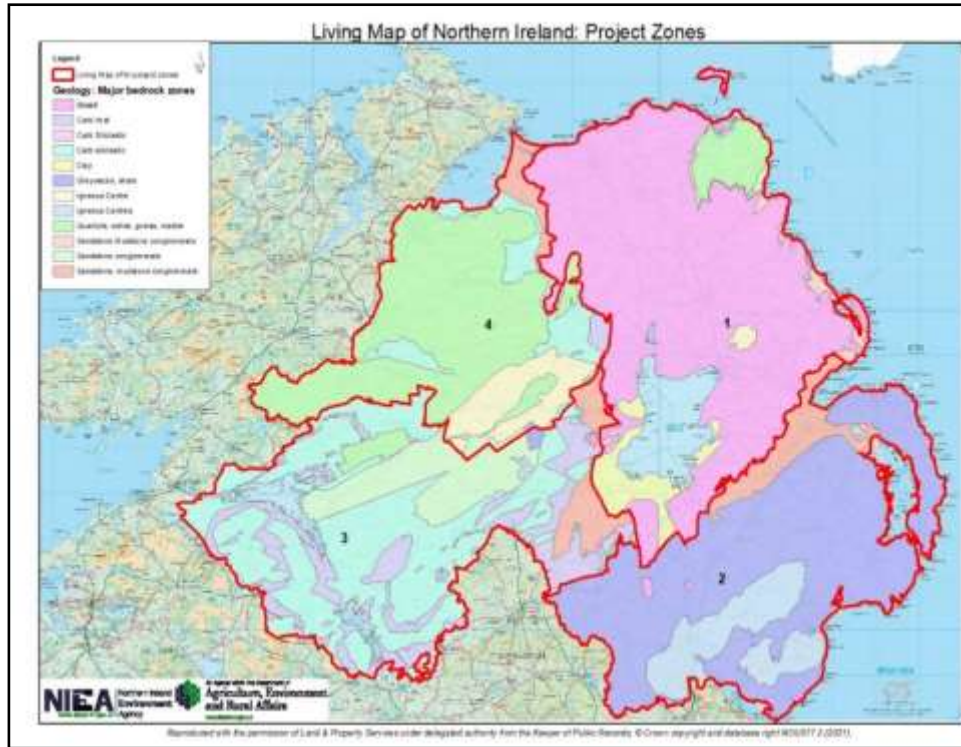
Conservation Management Plans

- Suite of CMPs being developed for freshwater, terrestrial & marine SACs – including peatland SACs
- Plans have defined necessary conservation measures for peatland sites including appropriate drain blocking, scrub and invasive species clearance, appropriate grazing regimes and addressing other pressures and threats.
- Majority of CMPs are due to be completed Dec 2022
- Partnership development and delivery mechanisms being further explored.
- Peace Plus proposals well developed, building on INTERREG - opening in 2023 (tbc)

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Living Map of Northern Ireland – Next Steps

– Asset register



- Land cover/habitat classification map of NI – 1st Iteration – Autumn 2022
- Analysis across 4 broad geological zones
- Continued ground-truthing – NIEA habitat surveys & **Northern Ireland Countryside Survey 2022**
- Assessment of bare peatland areas as a measure of condition
- Further development planned including updating EO data and introducing further habitat classifications to reflect the wider countryside
- Link into Nature Recovery Network and 30x30 scenarios

In partnership with 
Joint Nature Conservation Committee

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Horticulture at College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise

Research into the peat free alternatives for use in recreational and commercial horticulture

1. Development of peat free media for use in the production of herbaceous perennials
2. Peat free media for plant bedding, hardy ornamental nursery stock and protected ornamental species.
3. Assessment of performance of edible crops.



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Wildfires in Northern Ireland

A Strategic Way Forward

- NI Strategic Wildfire Group established
- NI Wildfire Stakeholders Forum established
- Wildfire Strategy being finalised with public consultation in the near future
- Development of the strategic action plan is ongoing.
- Fleet of specialist wildfire response vehicles is in joint service with NIEA and NIFRS - designed to access hard to reach areas including peatland areas.
- UK Wildfire Conference – The Human Dimension, 9-10th November



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Current Funding

Environmental Farming Scheme (EFS) 2017 – Present

- Supports remediation of peatland habitats - grazing, scrub removal
- Just under 5500 participants (1/5th of farm businesses)
- Delivered remedial management on 29,000 ha of peatland
- Continued piloting of group scheme - Carn Glenshane SAC

Environment Fund

- Current business case concludes April 2023
- Challenge Fund strand 2022/23 has offered £3.4m to date to deliver key environmental outcomes across Northern Ireland.
- ~ £500,000 has been awarded for peatland habitat restoration, development of management plans, capacity building and private finance scoping.

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Future Funding

DAERA Environment Fund

- Launch of Environment Fund competition (2023/24 – 2027/28) which will allocate in the region of £100million of funding through the 3 strands of the Environment Fund during the next 5 years.
- Objectives are to work with not-for-profit voluntary sector and district council partners to deliver key environmental outcomes including the protection, improvement and monitoring of habitats and species

PEACE PLUS

- Investment area 5.1 Biodiversity, Nature Recovery & Resilience - €40Million budget
- Habitat and species restoration - focus on wetland habitat and species is a key area of joint working with ROI counterparts
- Continued focus on and roll out implementation of management plans developed under INTERREG VA.

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Future Funding

Green Growth Capital Investment Programme

- Up to £700m of potential support for a range of projects over the next 5 years.
- Projects will contribute to the achievement of Green Growth objectives.
- Up to £60m of GGCIP funding identified to support DAERA's work in restoring natural habitats, including peatlands (subject to available budget).

Shared Island Fund

- Irish Government has committed €1 billion euro to be spent by 2025.
- Will support a wide range of cross-Border co-operation projects, including joined up approaches to climate action and biodiversity projects.
- Smaller scale projects could be awarded up to €100,000 per year for up to two years, while larger projects between could get up to €1m each year for four years.

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Way forward.....

- **Development of NI Peatland Strategy Implementation Plan**
- **Capital Restoration Delivery Mechanism**
- **Shaping Future Agri-environment Support**
- **Capacity Building**
- **Monitoring and Evaluation Framework**
- **Building Evidence Base**

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