

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Report for:

Historic Environment Policy for Northern Ireland

July 2026



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This report has been prepared in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004.

Approved by: Manus Deery, Director Department for Communities Historic Environment Division

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1 Introduction

HE Policy is **likely to have a significant effect on Northern Ireland's Environment** over the next 10 years and beyond. Much of that impact on the historic environment will be positive. This report demonstrates that there are many complimentary positive effects on other aspects of the environment which will result from the implementation of HE Policy. Any potential adverse effects, and methods to prevent, reduce and, as fully as possible, offset significant adverse effects have been considered and are also described within this report.

1.1 Key Facts

The key facts relating to Historic Environment policy for Northern Ireland are set out below:

- The Responsible Authority is the **Department for Communities Historic Environment Division**
- The title is **'An Historic Environment Policy for Northern Ireland'** (HE Policy)
- HE Policy falls under the scope of **Schedule 1** of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004 Regulations requiring a full SEA (See also Section 1.3 - Screening).
- The intended period covered by HE Policy is **10 years** from date of publication (proposed 2026 – 2036). However, any impacts associated with the proposed Policy may take effect over a period of many decades. For this reason, a longer-term view will be taken on potential impacts.
- HE Policy will be reviewed after **5 years**.
- The geographical area covered by HE Policy takes in **the whole of Northern Ireland**, including inshore and offshore marine regions. The Policy includes existing and potential transboundary partnerships with the remainder of the UK, the Republic of Ireland and relevant international partners.
- The purpose of HE Policy is to achieve its vision for **an inclusive and valued historic environment that delivers for Northern Ireland**

1.2 The SEA Process

In Northern Ireland, Plans and Programmes which may have an impact on the Environment are assessed through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004.¹

The stages of this SEA process are illustrated in Appendix 1a and 1b.

1.3 Screening Stage

In March 2025 the Department for Communities submitted an Historic Environment Policy for Northern Ireland (HE Policy) Screening Document to the Department of Agriculture the Environment and Rural affairs (DAERA), to confirm therein the requirement for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Report to be carried out.

Responses from DAERA **confirmed the potential for HE Policy to have significant effects on the environment**, and therefore the need for an **Environmental Assessment** and **Environmental Report** to be carried out.

This response also requested that HE Policy was screened for Appropriate Assessment, to ascertain if there are potential significant negative impacts on protected **Habitats**. This Screening report has been completed, with the conclusion that **there are no significant negative environmental impacts on protected Habitats anticipated as a result of HE Policy**.

¹ [The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2004](#)

1.4 Scoping Stage

After Screening, the next stage (Stage A - See Appendix 1a and 1b) of the SEA process is to submit a Scoping Report. The purpose of this SEA Scoping Report was to set out sufficient information to environmental authorities on proposed HE Policy to enable the consultation authorities to form a view on the consultation period and scope/level of detail that will be appropriate for the Environmental Report.

The statutory consultee established within the SEA legislation for Northern Ireland is **the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)**.

Due to the potential for transboundary impacts, In July 2025 the HE Policy SEA Scoping Report was also submitted to the appropriate environmental authorities in the remainder of the UK and the Republic of Ireland.

- **Northern Ireland** - DAERA and DfC Historic Environment Division
- **Scotland** - Historic Environment Scotland, NatureScot, and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency
- **Wales**: Cadw, Countryside Council for Wales (nil response), and the Environment Agency Wales (nil response),
- **England**: Countryside Agency (nil response), English Heritage (nil response), Natural England (nil response), and the Environment Agency (nil response),
- **Republic of Ireland**: Environmental protection Agency - Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage (nil response), Applications Unit - Minister for Climate, Energy and the Environment (nil response), Minister for Agriculture, Food, & the Marine (nil response)

The responses received have been considered when finalising both this SEA Environmental Report and Historic Environment Policy.

One of the main outcomes of the Scoping consultation exercise was the advice to ‘scope back in’ the SEA Objectives which concerned **Soil, Air** and **Water** as part of a full **Environmental Assessment**. Therefore, all SEA topics have been included in the subsequent Environmental Assessment of HE Policy.

1.5 Environmental Report Stage

Having consulted on the scope of HE Policy and considering the responses from the appropriate environmental consultants listed in section 1.4, the SEA process (Stage B and C - see Appendix 1a and 1b) requires the **Environmental Assessment** of HE Policy and the preparation of an **Environmental Report**. Consulting with the public on the draft plan or programme alongside the SEA Environmental Report will follow (Stage D see Appendix 1a and 1b).

Schedule 2 of the 2004 Act² defines '**Environmental Assessment**' (Article 2(b)) as a procedure comprising:

- preparing an **Environmental Report** on the likely significant (positive and negative) effects of the draft plan or programme (HE Policy).
- carrying out consultation on the draft plan or programme
- taking into account the Environmental Report and the results of consultation in decision making
- providing information when the plan or programme is adopted and showing how the results of the environmental assessment have been taken into account.

The effects of HE Policy and any potential reasonable alternatives have been considered, along with viable mitigation measures to avoid, reduce or offset adverse effects.

1.6 What comments are being sought through public consultation?

This Environmental Report accompanies the draft HE Policy for a 10-week public consultation between the **14th August 2026 and 23rd October 2026**.

With regards to the Environmental Report, DfC would welcome views on any aspect of this report, but in particular, the detailed findings and predictions for likely significant effects set out within **Parts 4- 9**. The main questions to consider are:

- **Has this environmental assessment identified the likely environmental effects of the options – both intended and unintended?**
- **Do you think there are any additional mitigation, enhancement, or monitoring measures that should be considered?**
- **Do you have any other comments on the environmental assessment?**

² [The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2004](#)

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2 An outline of the contents and main objectives of HE Policy

The vision for Historic Environment Policy for Northern Ireland is to achieve **an inclusive and valued historic environment that delivers for Northern Ireland**. This ‘delivery’ is aimed not solely at what the historic environment can deliver in its own interests, but how it can achieve real benefits for people, places and the planet – components which make up our environment. Potential policy impact and the breadth of shared objectives is immediately apparent when assessing the wide range of relevant plans, programmes, policies and strategies which influence and should be influenced by HE Policy.

2.1 Policy Context

Northern Ireland is one of four administrative regions of the UK. It is a predominantly a rural region, with 75% in agricultural use. The population of NI on 30th June 2023 was 1,920,400³. Almost two fifths of the urban population live within the Belfast Metropolitan Area with another sizeable concentration of population around Derry/Londonderry. The region has a distinctive cultural heritage and retains strong rural dimensions through the importance of agriculture and tourism and human interactions with the landscape. NI has 650 km of coastline, the majority of which is protected for its special interest, and several coastal species and habitats are recognised as internationally important.

In this policy, historic environment is defined as **the physical evidence for past human activity**. Having been occupied by humans for over 10,000 years, Northern Ireland has a rich historic environment, which includes a wide variety of historic places and individual or collective heritage assets including archaeology, historic buildings and monuments, historic towns, settlements, landscapes and seascapes. These ‘tangible’ assets are complemented by and complimentary to our ‘intangible’ heritage which comprises for example, oral traditions and expressions, language, performing arts, social practices, rituals and festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe and traditional craftsmanship⁴.

³ [Statistical Bulletin - 2023 Mid-year Population Estimates for Northern Ireland](#)

⁴ [Intangible Cultural Heritage \(ICH\) – ICOMOS-UK](#)

With regard to the protection of the physical environment, there are a number of nature conservation, landscape, seascape and cultural heritage designations in NI. For the historic environment these are designated as statutory (protected by law – eg. listed buildings, scheduled historic monuments, protected wrecks) or non-statutory (a material planning consideration – eg. defence heritage, industrial heritage), and can be of international, national or local importance.

The primary statutory management of the historic environment in Northern Ireland falls to the Department for Communities' (DfC) Historic Environment Division (HED). However, responsibility through ownership and stewardship of the historic environment falls to a wide variety of owners and occupants including but not exclusive to central government, local government, ecclesiastical bodies, businesses, charities and private individuals.

To date, Northern Ireland has never had an Historic Environment Policy.

In Northern Ireland we know about and have a record of 57,558 Heritage Assets⁵ (March 2024). Included in this figure are:

- 1 Transboundary Cultural World Heritage Site (Gracehill)
- 18,222 Sites and Monuments
- 2053 Scheduled Historic Monuments
- 186 Monuments in State care
- 16,321 Historic buildings worthy of recording
- 9124 Listed Buildings
- 16,648 sites on the Industrial Heritage Record (12,663 (24%) protected by formal designation)
- 663 Historic Parks or Gardens (HPGs)
- 4592 Defense Heritage Sites
- 324 battle sites
- 60 conservation areas
- 205 Areas of Townscape Character (ATC)s
- 1090 Local Landscape Policy Areas (LLPAs)

⁵ A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having cultural significance. HERoNI – HED Map Viewer

- 11 Areas of Significant Archaeological Interest
- 403 Historic Nucleated Settlements
- 832 Maritime Heritage Sites (inc in SMR)
- 384 known wreck sites
- 4 protected wrecks

2.2 Background to the need for an Historic Environment Policy

The Historic Environment in Northern Ireland is in decline. We know this because surveys to monitor the condition of listed buildings and monuments have given us this data⁶. A further survey of listed building and scheduled monument owners identified specific problems for people who own designated heritage assets.⁷

We also know that if it is cared for, understood and used, the historic environment can deliver benefits to people. Statistical evidence for these benefits exists for other parts of the UK and Ireland but is not readily available specifically for Northern Ireland.

A Heritage, Culture and Creativity Programme (HCC)⁸ was established by Northern Ireland's Department for Communities in July 2024 to protect, support and celebrate culture, heritage and the arts. Combined policies will offer an opportunity to understand, amplify and fully realise the rewards offered by Northern Ireland's unique culture and heritage – including the historic environment – to people. The Programme comprises an initial suite of four policies focused on public libraries, accredited museums, the arts, and this policy – a plan for our historic environment.

The HCC Programme has opened up an opportunity to create a Historic Environment Policy which will have catalytic and positive effects for people delivered through the historic environment; HE Policy aspires to reverse a declining historic environment and thus safeguard historic assets, ready to deliver and accommodate much broader benefits. As shown under the SEA Objectives described within this document those benefits are complementary to and shared with benefits to the environment.

⁶ [Survey on the Condition of Listed Buildings | Department for Communities](#)

⁷ [Market failure in heritage | Department for Communities](#)

⁸ [Heritage, Culture and Creativity \(HCC\) Programme | Department for Communities](#)

2.3 An outline of the contents and main objectives of HE Policy

Draft HE Policy is organised under three Sustainable Development Goals for the sectors identified by the Culture, Arts and Heritage taskforce⁹ : **Strengthening, Connecting** and **Innovating**.

These Sustainable Development Goals are not independent, they are interdependent. The same may be said of the interdependency between the historic environment and the natural environment or society. Much of the zone of influence of HE Policy relates to aspects of the environment across both tangible and intangible Cultural Heritage which have a synergistic effect when considered with Population and Health, Material Assets, Climate Change, Landscape, Biodiversity and so on. Strengthening one may provide benefits for the other, and so on. But any negative impacts may also have unintended consequences. Consideration of this multi-faceted impact is reflected in this Environmental Assessment and throughout HE Policy.

HE Policy aims are as follows:

2.1 Engagement

Since September 2024, the HCC Team has held in person engagement sessions with 11 District Councils, all Central Government departments, the Historic Monuments Council, the Historic Buildings Council, the Historic Environment Stakeholder Group NI and the Historic Environment Core Skills Group. Further engagement was carried out internally with other parts of DfC like Community and Voluntary Division, Climate Change Division, Neighbourhood Renewal, and Regeneration. Through this engagement, draft aims for HE Policy have been identified. These have been drafted into a matrix, organised to read across to the other 3 policies in the HCC Programme¹⁰. At the time of writing in early 2026, these 3 policies are also being prepared for public consultation.

What engagement also told us:

Owners:

⁹ [Heritage, Culture and Creativity \(HCC\) Programme | Department for Communities](#)

¹⁰ [The Heritage, Culture and Creativity Programme Purpose and Framework | Department for Communities](#)

HED's Listed Building and Historic Monument Owners' surveys¹¹ told us about the conservation deficit, the need to invest in skills and for access to advice, expertise and information.

Local and central government

HED met with each of the 11 District Councils and all 8 Central Government Departments. We found potential **Partnerships**. connections, shared aims and new ideas which could connect and amplify the actions across a joined-up HCC Programme and within an Historic Environment Policy which is linked to the Programme for Government – a policy which supports **People, Places, the Planet and Peace**.

Subject Matter Experts (SMEs):

HED met within other parts of our own Department (DfC) and we sought the views of the Historic Environment Stakeholder Group¹², The Heritage Skills Group, The Historic Buildings Council¹³ and the Historic Monuments Council¹⁴, who asked us for better partnerships, for people and places to be uppermost. We looked at how we could jointly meet the Department for Communities' ambition: **'Supporting people, Building communities, Shaping places'**.

The policies also reflect the work of the Culture, Arts and Heritage taskforce¹⁵, who engaged with the heritage sector and identified key shared sustainable development goals – to **Strengthen, Connect** and encourage **Innovation** in the culture, arts and heritage sectors in Northern Ireland.

These intersecting themes have created an organising framework, which is common across the four HCC policies, to ensure that the outcomes required are visible and complementary to each other within all four policies.

2.1.1 Sustainable Development Goal: Strengthening

Policy aims under this heading will describe the action necessary under HE Policy to **strengthen** the historic environment.

Engagement on HE Policy told us that: 'The Historic Environment in Northern Ireland is in decline.'

¹¹ [Market failure in heritage | Department for Communities](#)

¹² The Northern Ireland Historic Environment Stakeholder group consists of an alliance of representatives from key stakeholder organisations including heritage NGO's, universities, district councils, and government agencies. It is convened by Department for Communities' Historic Environment Division.

¹³ [Historic Buildings Council | Department for Communities](#)

¹⁴ [Historic Monuments Council | Department for Communities](#)

¹⁵ [Heritage, Culture and Creativity \(HCC\) Programme | Department for Communities](#)

Under the theme of ‘Strengthening’, it is first necessary to describe the weaknesses in the Historic Environment in Northern Ireland. Baseline evidence for these issues such as a decline in condition (environmental problems) and the challenges to reversing decline are described throughout this document.

HE Policy describes ‘Our Goal - A well cared for historic environment where best practice is universal.’

The needs and potential actions identified through engagement to reverse this decline, (having a positive impact on the environment and on SEA Objectives) summarise how HE Policy might tackle decline and move Northern Ireland towards best practice: a cared for historic environment.

2.1.2 Sustainable Development Goal: **Connecting**

Policy aims under this heading describe the action necessary under HE Policy to **connect** people to their historic environment.

Engagement on HE Policy told us that: ‘When people connect in and to historic places, they want to visit, live in and look after those places - and they thrive.’

Under the theme of ‘Connecting’, it is first necessary to describe the opportunities to connect people to their Historic Environment in Northern Ireland. Baseline data describes the current opportunities and challenges to realising that connection (environmental problems) throughout this document.

HE Policy describes ‘Our Goal - Thriving places - where the unique value of heritage is understood and enjoyed.’

Scrutiny has taken place through the SEA process of measurable data about how people value, interpret and use their historic places but also how HE Policy aims might target and measure progress to ensure that the historic environment can create thriving places for people.

2.1.3 Sustainable Development Goal: **Innovating**

Policy aims under this heading describe the actions necessary under HE Policy to support **innovation** within the historic environment.

Engagement on HE Policy told us that: ‘The historic environment is not always considered essential to people’s needs.’

Under the theme of ‘Innovating’, it is first necessary to understand the opportunities which might be offered to find creative solutions to challenges and opportunities within the Historic Environment in Northern Ireland. Baseline data describes the current opportunities here and challenges (environmental problems) to this potential.

HE Policy describes ‘Our Goal - A flourishing historic environment sector which is protected, sustained, accessed, and used to its full potential.’

Scrutiny of measurable data about people and how they interact with the historic environment has taken place through the SEA process but also how HE Policy might target and measure progress to ensure that the historic environment can meet people’s needs – encouraging innovation so that it is used to its full potential.

3 Assessment of Environmental Impact

3.1 Zone of influence of Historic Environment Policy in Northern Ireland

HE Policy will impact a geographical area which includes all of Northern Ireland, containing urban areas, rural areas, and its inshore and offshore areas. HE Policy may also have an influence on landscapes and intervisible landscapes/seascapes between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland or Scotland, as shown below. In reality, the intangible cultural historic and current connections between Northern Ireland and other parts of the UK, Ireland and even further to the USA or Nordic Countries are not possible to define on a map.



Fig.1 – Northern Ireland and its physical and intervisible relationship with other regions of the UK and the Republic of Ireland (copyright - Google maps)

3.2 Assessment of the relationship of HE Policy with other relevant plans and programmes

A ‘Heritage Delivers’¹⁶ document was published by the NI Heritage Stakeholder Group (who represent Northern Ireland’s heritage sector) in 2019 and again in 2026. These statistical reports described the breadth of evidence that Heritage is already ‘delivering’ on the ground for people in Northern Ireland. It also demonstrates the potential for much more – how heritage could be used as a resource to deliver more for people, society, the economy and for the environment.

The strength of this potential for delivery can be further demonstrated by the large number of plans and programmes that the historic environment and therefore HE Policy could impact or contribute to.

HE Policy will provide high level advice on Government’s attitude to the historic environment which will influence current and future plans, programmes and strategies. HE Policy is an opportunity to connect positive heritage outcomes to areas outside of the ‘heritage’ world, including those within the NI Programme for Government and strategies or initiatives across central and local government. As a material consideration for development strategies like Local Development Plans and Community Planning, HE Policy will highlight and direct this potential **at a strategic level**.

¹⁶ [NI HERITAGE DELIVERS 2026 CASE STUDIES AND STATISTICS ON HOW HERITAGE BENEFITS NORTHERN IRELAND | Heritage Delivers](#)

3.2.1 **Table 1** – Consideration of proposed level of impact of HE Policy on other plans and programmes

Issues relating to Historic Environment Policy and impact on other plans and programmes	
HE Policy will impact wide-ranging potential environmental effects at a strategic level.	✓
HE Policy will not direct detailed potential environmental effects at a project/site specific level.	X
HE Policy has considered baseline information relating to the strategic issues associated with the protection, conservation, enhancement and use of the historic environment and the wider environment.	✓
HE Policy will not replace the need for project and site specific, plans strategies and individuals to collect detailed project specific baseline data issues associated with the protection, conservation, enhancement and use of the historic environment and the wider environment.	X
HE Policy will inform the development and implementation of Local Development Plans, Community Plans and Historic Environment Plans such as Heritage Plans. It may also impact Climate Action Plans, Inclusive Growth Strategies, Green and Blue Infrastructure Plans for example.	✓
HE Policy will not specifically address issues of land use or infrastructure planning policy, including that relating to consent procedures, but will cross-refer to other policies, plans and programmes where relevant.	X
HE Policy will help identify areas where there may be opportunities for enhancement, or environmental constraints against, the protection, conservation, enhancement and use of the historic environment, and synergistic effects with other aspects of the environment.	✓
HE Policy will not demarcate specific sites or areas for development or avoidance but will identify the issues leading to constraints or opportunities.	X

The tables which describe specific plans, programmes, strategies and environmental protection objectives which have a relationship with HE Policy, are shown under each SEA Topic.

3.3 Environmental Assessment

Environmental Assessment of HE Policy is set out under each SEA Topic in four parts.

Part 1 – Relationship of HE Policy to Other Plans and programmes

The relationships between HE Policy and other plans and programmes, and the relationship between HE Policy and existing international and NI specific statutory and non-statutory environmental protection objectives have been assessed below under each SEA Topic.

Part 2 - Environmental Characteristics

The current state of the environment in Northern Ireland has been described under each topic:

- **Existing baseline:** Aspects of the current state of the environment including baseline data relevant to the aim

Information has been gathered from a number of principal sources including:

- HERONI¹⁷ – Historic Environment Record of Northern Ireland (HERoNI), Department for Communities (DfC)
- The Historic Environment Map Viewer¹⁸ (DfC)
- The Natural Environment Map Viewer¹⁹ (DAERA)
- The Marine Map Viewer²⁰ (DAERA)
- The Northern Ireland Environmental Statistics Report 2025²¹ and Heritage Delivers²²

¹⁷ [Historic Environment Record of Northern Ireland \(HERoNI\) | Department for Communities](#)

¹⁸ [Historic Environment map viewer | Department for Communities](#)

¹⁹ [Natural Environment Map Viewer | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

²⁰ [Marine Mapviewer | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

²¹ [Northern Ireland Environmental Statistics Report 2025 | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

²² [NI HERITAGE DELIVERS 2026 CASE STUDIES AND STATISTICS ON HOW HERITAGE BENEFITS NORTHERN IRELAND | Heritage Delivers](#)

- **Environmental Problems:** Environmental Problems which are relevant to the aim including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance and relevant to the historic environment

Part 3 – HE Policy Impact

A summary below each SEA Topic describes the impact that HE Policy might have on each of these aspects of Northern Ireland's environment, including implications for the environment without HE Policy

Part 4 – Suggested HE Policy Aims

A summary below each SEA Topic describes

- the alternatives considered for each HE Policy aim
- level of positive/negative impact of each HE Policy aim on SEA Topics
- measures to monitor the environmental effects of implementing each HE Policy aim
- proposed mitigation for any potential negative effects of implementing each HE Policy aim

Framework/Criteria for considering HE Policy aim alternatives

The likely significant effects on the environment, including short, medium and long-term effects, permanent and temporary effects, positive and negative effects, or secondary, cumulative and synergistic effects, grouped under the SEA Objectives are shown according to their proposed level of impact on the SEA topics:

Material Assets, Landscape, Population / Health , Climatic Factors, Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna, Soil, Air and Water , Cultural Heritage

Key to level of effect:

Significant positive effect	Positive effect	Minor or neutral effect	Uncertain effect	Adverse effect	Significantly adverse effect
++	+	0	?	-	--

3.4 Mitigation - Minimising Adverse Effects

The SEA process requires this Environmental Report to set out '*the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme*'.

The SEA process has identified some uncertain effects on the environment when HE Policy might influence plans, policies or programmes at a project specific level, for example the effects of increased access to historic landscapes on flora and fauna, or impacts on air quality with potentially more car access being required to visit historic monuments in State Care. Potentially adverse effects will be minimised through compliance with legislation and standard survey and mitigation procedures as part of the development/planning application process.

When considering development, planning authorities are required to consider the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) as a whole, including specific planning policies, core planning principles and furthering sustainable development objectives that balance sustainable development and protection of the built and natural environment.

The planning requirements and restrictions set out in SPPS must be complied with when planning for any development to ensure that impacts on the natural and built environment are either avoided, minimised or mitigated for. Local Planning authorities will need to carry out or commission SEA of their Local Development Plans; in some cases Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) may also be required (i.e. where there is a risk of the conservation objectives of a National Site Network site being adversely affected), and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) may also need to be undertaken.

As a result, none of the potentially adverse or uncertain impacts considered as part of the Assessment of HE Policy are deemed to be significant, and specific mitigation measures for HE Policy do not appear needed, so long as the restrictions and requirements already included in SPPS are enforced.

HE Policy will provide direction for the Historic Environment in Northern Ireland for the next 10 years. More subject specific policy, plans or strategies are likely to follow from HE Policy. These will be individually screened to consider their potential to significantly impact the environment and for the requirement to carry out the SEA Process.

4 Places

4.1 Part 1- Material Assets – Relationships with other plans, strategies and programmes

SEA Topic - Material Assets

Protection

Relevant legislation:

- **Planning Act (NI) 2011**
- **Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects (Northern Ireland) Order 1995**
- **Protection of Military Remains Act 1986**
- **Protection of Wrecks Act, 1973**
- **Merchant Shipping Act 1995**
- **The Fisheries Act (Northern Ireland) 1966**
- **Treasure Act 1996**
- **UK Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009**
- **The Marine Act (NI) 2013**
- **The Climate Change Act 2022**
- **Dealing in Cultural Objects (offences) Act 2003**
- **The Finance Act 1976 (Conditional Exemption)**

International Convention, declaration or charter	Legislative basis, environmental objectives or requirements of the plan or programme	How objectives and requirements of other plans or programmes might be taken on board in Historic Environment Policy (HE Policy) or how HE Policy might impact other plans, policies or programmes	Impacts on HE Policy	HE Policy may impact outcomes
The Granda Convention (1985) for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage of Europe (revised - The Valletta Convention on Protection of Archaeology - 1992) ²³	This convention is legally binding. The European Convention for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (revised) was originally signed by the UK in 1969 but revised in Valetta in 1992. It reflects the nature of threats to archaeological heritage, from unauthorised excavations and major construction projects. The revised text makes the conservation and enhancement of the archaeological heritage one of the goals of urban and regional planning policies. Signatories (including the UK) promise to allow the input of expert archaeologists into the making of planning policies and planning decisions.	Historic Environment Policy will align with the Convention's objective to protect archaeological heritage, but also to promote the wider understanding and appreciation of the historic environment, including public access and education to protect it through the valuing of archaeology, and the role that these material assets have in shaping places.	✓	
UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (1970) ²⁴	The UK accepted this Convention in 2002. It urges '<i>States Parties to take measures to prohibit and prevent the illicit trafficking of cultural property.</i> <i>It provides a common framework for the States Parties on the measures to be taken to prohibit and prevent the import, export and transfer of cultural property.</i> <i>The return and restitution of cultural property is central to the Convention and its duty is not only to remember but to fundamentally safeguard the identity of peoples and</i>	Historic Environment Policy will support and align with the principal objective in that material cultural property (the Historic Environment) should be safeguarded. HE Policy will support activity which will align with the articles in the convention such as: • <i>Draft[ing] appropriate national legislation</i> • <i>Establish[ing] national services for the protection of cultural heritage (HED)</i> • <i>Promot[ing] museums, libraries, archives</i> • <i>Establish[ing] national inventories (HERoNI)</i>	✓	

²³ [Convention for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage of Europe \(revised\) \(Valletta, 1992\) - Culture and Cultural Heritage](#)

²⁴ This is supported by **UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects: The Role of International Arbitration (1995)**

	<i>promote peaceful societies whereby the spirit of solidarity will be strengthened.</i>	<i>Implement[ing] educational programmes to develop respect for cultural heritage</i>		
The Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (The 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its two (1954 and 1999) Protocols)²⁵	Ratified by the UK in 1954, the Hague Convention is intended to play a role in the protection of heritage. It is the first and the most comprehensive multilateral treaty dedicated exclusively to the protection of cultural heritage in times of peace as well as during an armed conflict. It aims to protect cultural property, such as monuments of architecture, art or history, archaeological sites, works of art, manuscripts, books and other objects of artistic, historical or archaeological interest, as well as scientific collections of any kind regardless of their origin or ownership. The United Nations Security Council resolution 2347, adopted in March 2017 equates the deliberate destruction of cultural heritage with a war crime in certain circumstances.	Historic Environment Policy will share the objective of this convention to protect the material assets which represent the Historic Environment, including architecture, monuments, archaeological sites and artefacts in a collective, global capacity.	✓	
The Declaration of Amsterdam (1975)²⁶	This Declaration has no legal force but recommends best practice and doctrine. Signatories recognise that: <i>'The conservation of the architectural heritage should become an integral part of urban and regional planning.</i> <i>Integrated conservation involves the responsibility of local authorities and calls for citizens' participation.</i>	Historic Environment Policy will support and enhance the objectives of this Declaration in Northern Ireland, focusing on integration, social factors and inclusiveness, access and citizen's participation. It will furthermore support the objectives which necessitate support of heritage skills and investment to support owners of heritage and therefore material assets.	✓	

²⁵ [The 1954 hague convention for the protection of cultural property in the event of armed conflict and its two - 1954 and 1999.pdf](#)

²⁶ [Declaration of Amsterdam.doc](#)

	<i>The success of any policy of integrated conservation depends on taking social factors into consideration.</i> <i>Integrated conservation necessitates the adaptation of legislative and administrative measures.</i> <i>Integrated conservation necessitates appropriate financial means.</i> <i>Integrated conservation requires the promotion of methods, techniques and skills for restoration and rehabilitation.'</i>			
The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance (The Burra Charter 1979, 2013 Revision)²⁷	This Charter has no legal force but recommends best practice and doctrine. It provides guidance for the conservation and management of places of cultural significance (cultural heritage places). Signatories agree that conservation is an integral part of the management of places of cultural significance and is an ongoing responsibility.	Historic Environment Policy will support and enhance the strategic objectives of this Charter in Northern Ireland, focusing on the responsible care for and enhancement of the connection of material heritage assets to places and intangible culture.	✓	
The Florence Charter 1982 (International Council on Monuments and Sites) requires responsible authorities to adopt appropriate measures for the identification, listing and	<i>An historic garden is an architectural and horticultural composition of interest to the public from the historical or artistic point of view... As such, it is to be considered as a monument. As a monument, the historic garden must be preserved in accordance with the spirit of the Venice Charter. However, since it is a living monument, its preservation must be governed by specific rules which are the subject of the [Florence] charter.</i>	Historic Environment Policy will support and enhance the strategic objectives of this Charter in Northern Ireland, reinforcing the protection of historic gardens as heritage assets – but also their contribution to wellbeing, place making and biodiversity.	✓	

²⁷ [Burra Charter 2013 \(Adopted 31.10.2013\)](#)

protection of historic gardens UNESCO Nara Document on Authenticity (1994)²⁸	This Document emphasises the importance of cultures which ‘belong to the world’, but are in the hands of those to whom tangible and intangible heritage is located, and so the responsibility for the care and interpretation of that heritage rests with each place. <i>‘All cultures and societies are rooted in the particular forms and means of tangible and intangible expression which constitute their heritage, and these should be respected.’</i> <i>and</i> <i>‘...the cultural heritage of each is the cultural heritage of all. Responsibility for cultural heritage and the management of it belongs, in the first place, to the cultural community that has generated it, and subsequently to that which cares for it.’</i>	HE Policy will emphasise the importance of the international responsibility for the care of our local historic environment to the world and that it rests with people in Northern Ireland. HE Policy also supports the diversity and multiplicity of heritage interpretation – emphasising that access to heritage should belong to everyone as a public good.		
ICOMOS Charter on the Built Vernacular Heritage (1999)²⁹	The Charter declares that: <i>‘The built vernacular heritage is important; it is the fundamental expression of the culture of a community, of its relationship with its territory and, at the same time, the expression of the world's cultural diversity.’</i> <i>‘Due to the homogenisation of culture and of global socio-economic transformation, vernacular structures all around the world are extremely vulnerable, facing serious</i>	HE Policy will align with the principles of this charter with respect to protection, conservation and enhancement of material assets but also to landscapes and craft skills, recognising the unique way that people have responded to their environment.		

²⁸ [Nara Document on Authenticity, Report of the Experts Meeting, November 1994](#)

²⁹ [Microsoft Word - Engl. Vernacular Heritage.doc](#)

Leeuwarden Declaration 2018 ³⁰	<i>problems of obsolescence, internal equilibrium and integration’.</i> <i>‘It is necessary, therefore, in addition to the Venice Charter, to establish principles for the care and protection of our built vernacular heritage.’</i> The Declaration, signed by the UK in 2018 <i>‘highlights the multiple benefits of re-using built heritage, calls for smart and quality-based processes in adaptive re-use projects and stresses the importance of the dialogue between heritage and contemporary architecture.’</i>	Historic Environment Policy will align with the values and good practices which form the objectives of the Leeuwarden Declaration, including an emphasis on the importance of ‘<i>cultural heritage</i>’ for sustainable development, and the re-use of material heritage assets, demonstrating and supporting the multiple benefits for people, places and the planet.		
Other plan/programme or strategy	Legislative basis, environmental objectives or requirements of the plan or programme	How objectives and requirements of other plans or programmes might be taken on board in Historic Environment Policy (HE Policy) or how HE Policy might impact other plans, policies or programmes	Impacts on HE Policy	HE Policy may impact outcomes
Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS) ³¹	The RDS has a statutory basis. It sets out the framework for the spatial development for the Northern Ireland Region up to 2035. The RDS is cross-cutting with linkages to other key government policies and statutory legislation.	Historic Environment Policy will align with and expand on the Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS) which lists as one of its 8 key aims to: ‘<i>Protect and enhance the environment for its own sake.</i>’ It sets out regional guidance to “<i>Conserve, protect and where possible, enhance our built heritage and our natural environment</i>’ HE Policy will provide high level advice on Government’s attitude to the historic environment which will influence		

³⁰ [Europa Nostra endorses Leeuwarden Declaration on Adaptive Re-Use of Built Heritage - Europa Nostra](#)

³¹ [Regional Development Strategy 2035 | Department for Infrastructure](#)

Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS)³²	(SPPS) regional strategic objectives for archaeology and built heritage are to: • <i>secure the protection, conservation and, where possible, the enhancement of our built and archaeological heritage;</i> • <i>promote sustainable development and environmental stewardship with regard to our built and archaeological heritage; and</i> • <i>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.</i>	future development of the RDS and therefore material assets. Historic Environment Policy will align with and expands on the Strategic Planning Policy Statement HE Policy will provide high level advice on Government's attitude to the historic environment which will influence the implementation of the SPPS (SPPS is based on protective legislation, however, it is guided by policy in practice.) HE Policy will set the framework for managing and protecting heritage assets by conserving, enhancing and promoting 'sustainable development and environmental stewardship' of assets, which may be protected, may be of heritage value (even if unprotected) or may sit within natural or cultural sites such as LLPAs (Local Landscape Policy Areas) AONBs (Areas of Natural Beauty) and Conservation Areas – this will have a beneficial effect on protected assets and sites and their wider settings – the environment. HE Policy will recommend how the historic environment can support places (and therefore material assets) at varying scales to make the most of their heritage assets to benefit local communities, and their local environments. This should impact actions and strategies or local plans such as Local Development Plans, Heritage Plans and Climate Change Action Plans		
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³² [Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland \(SPPS\)](#)

Sustainable Development Strategy ‘Everyone’s involved’ 2010 and United Nations Sustainable Development Goals	This provides a framework for sustainability across Government departments and has been supplemented by work on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs) and mapping of same across the Programme for Government outcomes and indicators,	for local councils.’ <i>Deliver[ing] economic and community benefit</i>’, whilst benefitting the environment. HE policy will help ensure that the reference to heritage and the promotion of sustainable land and marine management in the 2010 document will be fully realised.		
Northern Ireland Local Development Plans (LDPs)	Local Development Plans set out how an area should look in the future by deciding the type and scale of development and where buildings should be allowed. Each council must prepare a development plan for their area in consultation with the local community. The aim of the plan is to make sure there is enough land available for the area’s housing, employment and community facilities, while protecting important landscape and environmental features. Through the development plan, councils can identify the best locations for new homes, businesses and infrastructure while also protecting places of value to people or wildlife. The plans are an important consideration in dealing with planning applications and should help guide decision-making.	Representing the government’s view on the historic environment, HE Policy will impact the establishment, management and future review or amendment of Local Development Plans. LDP Strategy will include the vision, objectives, growth strategy and strategic policies for each council area. This should address the economic, social and development issues of an area by indicating where development, including regeneration, should take place and what form it should take. LDPs should have conformity with central government regional plans, policy and guidance – and therefore Historic Environment Policy which supports regeneration and the protection of landscape and environmental features should have a key impact on LDPs and the future review of LDPs.		

NI Architecture and Built Environment (A+BE) Policy³³ and ‘Living Places – An Urban Stewardship and Design Guide for NI’³⁴	<i>At the heart of the ‘Architecture and the Built Environment for Northern Ireland’ policy is a demand for a step change in the quality of design, construction and performance of publicly funded development.</i> <i>The Policy Vision is for: ‘An attractive, healthy, safe and sustainable built environment which functions efficiently and enriches the experience of living for everyone in Northern Ireland. Through good architecture, landscape and urban planning our cities, towns and neighbourhoods can be made more inspiring and welcoming. Evidence shows that we respond positively to buildings and places which are visually attractive and efficient in use. In all areas social, economic and environmental benefit result from investment in good design.’</i> The Urban Stewardship and Design Guide aims to ..‘clearly establish the key principles behind good place making. It seeks to inform and inspire all those involved in the process of managing (stewardship) and making (design) urban places, with a view to raising standards across Northern Ireland.’	The policy vision for the A+BE Policy (currently under review at time of writing – Autumn 2026) is not dissimilar to that of HE Policy – though heritage assets in many cases predate the advent of the ‘architect’. The contribution of heritage to attractive and sustainable places is a shared goal between the two policies. The A+BE Policy is an NI Executive wide Policy and therefore is intended to have wide reaching impact. The partnership between creative, high-quality development which conserves and where necessary enhances heritage assets and places in important to both policies which support and complement each other’s objectives.		
Draft ‘Circular Economy’ Strategy (2023) And The Draft Investment Strategy for	There are four key objectives as set out by DfE in their Draft Circular Economy Strategy. One of the key sectors to create a circular economy and reduce carbon is the built environment, including a hierarchy for the built environment sector to prioritise circularity, with maintenance and prolonging the life of a	There is a need for skills to identify, protect, enhance and promote Northern Ireland’s heritage assets, which are an existing but currently underused resource. Historic Environment Policy will support skills which meet this need. The Draft Circular Economy Strategy points directly to creating skills for as well as maintaining and adapting		

³³ [Architecture and Built Environment Policy | Department for Communities](#)

³⁴ [Living Places - An Urban Stewardship and Design Guide for Northern Ireland | Department for Infrastructure](#)

Northern Ireland 2050 (ISNI 2050)	building, its components and materials at the top of the hierarchy.	existing (including historic) buildings for the future as part of a circular economy. HE Policy should demonstrate the need to continue the policy emphasis on heritage as a cornerstone to a circular economy. <i>Environment Pillar: ‘We have a responsibility to current and future generations to protect and enhance our environment and to conserve the rich diversity that our natural and built heritage possesses’.</i>		
The Adaptive Re-use of Existing Assets – The Strategic Investment Board (SIB)³⁵	The Strategic Investment Board works with The Executive Office, Department of Finance and spending departments to create the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland (ISNI). It sets out priorities and objectives for investment in infrastructure such as roads, transport, schools, health facilities, social housing, water infrastructure, etc. In 2024 SIB published a document which recommends the Adaptive Re-use of buildings. ‘Maximising our existing resources, reducing carbon emissions and building community cohesion are central tenets of the NI Executive’s plan for Northern Ireland. These core objectives are outlined in the Draft Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland (ISNI) and the Adaptive Re-Use of Existing Assets aligns perfectly with this strategic framework, as well as several regulatory commitments, strategic frameworks and environmental benchmarks set by both the NI government and key professional entities.’	Historic Environment Policy will provide high level advice on Government’s attitude to the historic environment, supporting the use and re-use of material heritage assets including buildings and infrastructure. HE Policy will support and influence the SIB’s direction and actions on investment in the use and re-use of government heritage assets.		

³⁵ [AREA-Report-2024.pdf](#)

Housing Supply Strategy 2024 - 2039 – Department for Communities	DfC's Housing Strategy names the re-use and upgrade of historic housing stock as part of the strategy to help people <i>'feel a sense of belonging'</i> . It suggests that <i>'the opportunity to adapt, recycle and re-use existing buildings to increase supply and create thriving communities'</i> is used because heritage assets <i>'contribute to visual amenity and attractiveness'</i> .	Strategies to maintain, enhance, retrofit for energy efficiency and re-use heritage assets which may not have been originally designed for housing align with intended HE Policy aims – the two could work together to create shared positive outcomes relating to long lasting, characterful places to live.	✓	✓
Shaping Sustainable Places³⁶ Department for Communities	Shaping Sustainable Places is a long-term programme of regeneration interventions that aims to reshape village, town and city centres by DfC. <i>'It is proposed that Shaping Sustainable places interventions could include, but not be limited to, those that: ..Restore heritage assets.'</i>	HE Policy will support and amplify key ambitions of in the draft Shaping Sustainable Places Programme which include Regeneration and Placemaking, Community Planning, Growing a Globally Competitive and Sustainable Economy, providing more Social, Affordable and Sustainable Housing, and meeting High Street Taskforce Recommendations.	✓	✓
City and Growth Deals – Invest NI³⁷	<i>A City or Growth Deal is a bespoke package of funding and decision-making powers negotiated between government and local authorities. They are aimed at helping to harness additional investment, create new jobs and speed up inclusive and sustainable economic growth.</i>	With historic structures potentially acting as unique, bespoke projects which visually enforce identity and pride in places, heritage assets which are at the centre of regeneration projects could compliment, enhance and even be the start of City and Growth Deals, such as those at Carrickfergus where the state care Castle is a unique draw.	✓	✓

³⁶ [Shaping Sustainable Places consultation](#)

³⁷ [City and Growth Deals | Invest Northern Ireland](#)

(End)

4.2 Part 2 – Material Assets - Environmental characteristics

SEA topic	SEA Objective
Material assets	Create places, spaces and buildings that work well, wear well and look well

4.2.1 Material Assets – Existing Baseline

There are over 57,558 known Heritage Assets³⁸. The location of known and designated assets is available on a spatial dataset (HED Map Viewer). These are listed below (please note this list is not exhaustive, for example there are many historic artefacts, archives and information within the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) and numerous National and Local Museums).

In Northern Ireland there are:

- 9,124 listed buildings (March 2024) Some listings include multiple buildings; therefore, the total number of buildings protected in this way is slightly higher.
- 186 Monuments in State care (March 2024)
- 2,053 scheduled historic monuments (March 2024) Overall, there has been a 36 per cent increase in the number of scheduled monuments since 2001/02
- There are 15,100 Sites and Monuments (March 2024) excluding State Care and scheduled monuments
- 663 Historic Parks, Gardens or Demesnes (HPGs) Grade A and A*
- 1 Transboundary Cultural World Heritage Site
- 4 protected wrecks (March 2024)
- 832 Maritime Heritage Sites (included in Scheduled Monument Record)
- 384 known wreck sites

³⁸ HERoNI – HED Map Viewer [Historic Environment map viewer](#) | [Department for Communities](#)

- 16,062 (March 2023) sites on the Industrial Heritage Record - 12,663 (24%) protected by statutory designation(s). These include infrastructure in daily use such as bridges, railway structures, canals or elements of Ni Water's Spelga Dam complex.
- 4593 (March 2023) Defence Heritage Sites
- 0 Local Lists

Local Places

- There were just over 600 listed building consent applications in 2023- 2024, and 1400 further non-statutory applications affecting listed buildings or their settings.
- 16,062 Historic buildings worthy of recording are included on the NI Buildings database – this means that circa 7,000 heritage assets were worthy of survey and are recorded but fell short of being of 'special interest'.
- As seen in the work of the Architectural Heritage Fund³⁹, The National Churches Trust⁴⁰ and Heritage Trust Network⁴¹, there are multiple examples which show how meeting local needs stems from caring for and investing in long established heritage networks, assets and places.
- Northern Ireland has 2,500 churches and chapels – more per head than anywhere else in the United Kingdom⁴²; Ecclesiastical heritage makes up about 10% of NI's listed and therefore most special buildings, with a further 193 scheduled monuments affiliated with church sites. Standing at the heart of most communities: graveyards, ecclesiastical sites and '*...churches provide so many essential services for communities across the UK. From youth groups to foodbanks, they help to support the wellbeing of millions of people, including the most vulnerable in society*⁴³.'
- National Churches Trust 'House of Good' report states that over £16 of social good is created in communities by £1 invested in churches.
- There are many monuments, graveyards pumps and telephone boxes in all parts of Northern Ireland which are small scale opportunities for communities to come together and care for heritage in their communities, creating a shared sense of pride and community cohesion, as well as good relations.
- Community Asset Transfer (CAT) is the process of transferring publicly-owned land and buildings from public authorities to community organisations. These assets, which can be heritage assets managed by public bodies, can be revitalised under community ownership or

³⁹ [Northern Ireland | The Architectural Heritage Fund](#)

⁴⁰ [Treasure Ireland: specialist support for Northern Ireland places of worship | National Churches Trust](#)

⁴¹ [Northern Ireland - Heritage Trust Network](#)

⁴² [Supporting Northern Ireland's churches and chapels | National Churches Trust](#)

⁴³ [The House of Good research | National Churches Trust](#)

management to better serve local needs. CAT empowers communities to utilise these resources for local development, creating social, economic, and environmental benefits.⁴⁴

- DfC supports activity which enables City Deals such as works to Carrickfergus Castle, the Small Settlements Scheme⁴⁵, where heritage will be a key part of growth and development, and new ‘Neighbourhood Community Partnerships’, for whom heritage has been identified as a commodity, not just for ‘heritage’s sake’ but as a key cornerstone for communities, contributing to their sense of place.
- DfC has a Housing Supply Strategy⁴⁶, where the re-use and upgrade of historic housing stock forms part of the strategy to help people ‘feel a sense of belonging’, ‘the opportunity to adapt, recycle and re-use existing buildings to increase supply and create thriving communities’ is used and heritage asset ‘contribute to visual amenity and attractiveness’.
- The Executive’s draft Anti-Poverty strategy⁴⁷ aspires to eliminate disadvantage, making all parts of NI equal.
- DfC’s Fuel Poverty strategy⁴⁸ aspires to improve the energy efficiency of homes, including those in historic buildings, to ensure the most vulnerable in our society are not left behind in efforts to address climate change. The response to the consultation, published 21/10/25, suggests support for a Whole House Approach (Q11) and strong support for common quality assurance standard for energy efficiency (Q32) of [Fuel Poverty Strategy Consultation](#).
- The Protocol for the Care of the Government Estate⁴⁹ is a document set out by the NI Executive explaining how departments and agencies will put their commitment into practice for caring and protecting historic estates, many of which sit amongst local communities and within shared places and landscapes, accessible to the public.
- In 2025 DfC commissioned AHF to research a ‘Town Centre Heritage Regeneration Fund’ to consider investment options to address acute housing need in market towns by reuse of vacant heritage assets.
- The Independent Assessment used to help inform the third UK Climate Risk Assessment (CCRA3)⁵⁰ assesses 61 risks and opportunities from climate change to Northern Ireland, including to business, infrastructure, housing, the natural environment, our health and from the impacts of climate change internationally. Risks to cultural heritage have been identified. As well as risks to people, communities and buildings from flooding.

⁴⁴ [Community Asset Transfer - Development Trusts NI](#)

⁴⁵ [Ministers announce collaborative approach to regeneration for small settlements | Department for Communities](#)

⁴⁶ [Housing Supply Strategy 2024 - 2039 | Department for Communities](#)

⁴⁷ [Poverty Policy | Department for Communities](#)

⁴⁸ [Warm Healthy Homes 2026-2036: A new Fuel Poverty Strategy for Northern Ireland | Department for Communities](#)

⁴⁹ [Protocol for the Care of the Government Historic Estate | Department for Communities](#)

⁵⁰ [Summary for Northern Ireland \(CCRA3-IA\) - UK Climate Risk](#)

- The Northern Ireland Climate Change Adaptation Plan (NICCAP3) - The Climate Change Act 2008 (the 2008 Act) places a statutory duty on Northern Ireland Executive Departments to lay programmes before the Northern Ireland Assembly, which set out their objectives, policies, proposals and timelines for introducing those policies and proposals in response to the most recent UK Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA). To fulfil this legal requirement the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) has led on the development of a series of single coordinated adaptation programmes, which are known as the Northern Ireland Climate Change Adaptation Programme (NICCAP), since the 2008 Act came into effect. A Key Area of NICCAP is that of *‘People and the Environment’* :
 - *This key area combines 4 thematic areas due to the co-dependencies between them and links the themes of Towns & Cities, Buildings, Health, and Community Preparedness & Response ... This key area is concerned with the impacts of climate change on our lived experiences and so looks at how the built and urban environment we live in interacts with our health and how climate change poses risks to these. It also recognises the importance of a community’s ability to prepare for and respond to emergency situations such as extreme weather events linked to climate change. The chapters each lay out the identified risks and opportunities for each theme and the actions relating to these risks ..’*

In addition:

- There were 99 active listed building enforcement requests in March 2024.
- There were 6 incidents of unauthorised change to monuments in 2023-24.
- It is estimated that pre-1919 buildings make up just over one sixth⁵¹ of buildings in Northern Ireland, however, the number lost annually is not monitored.
- Thousands of artefacts collected from Licensed Archaeological excavations currently held in storage.

Skills:

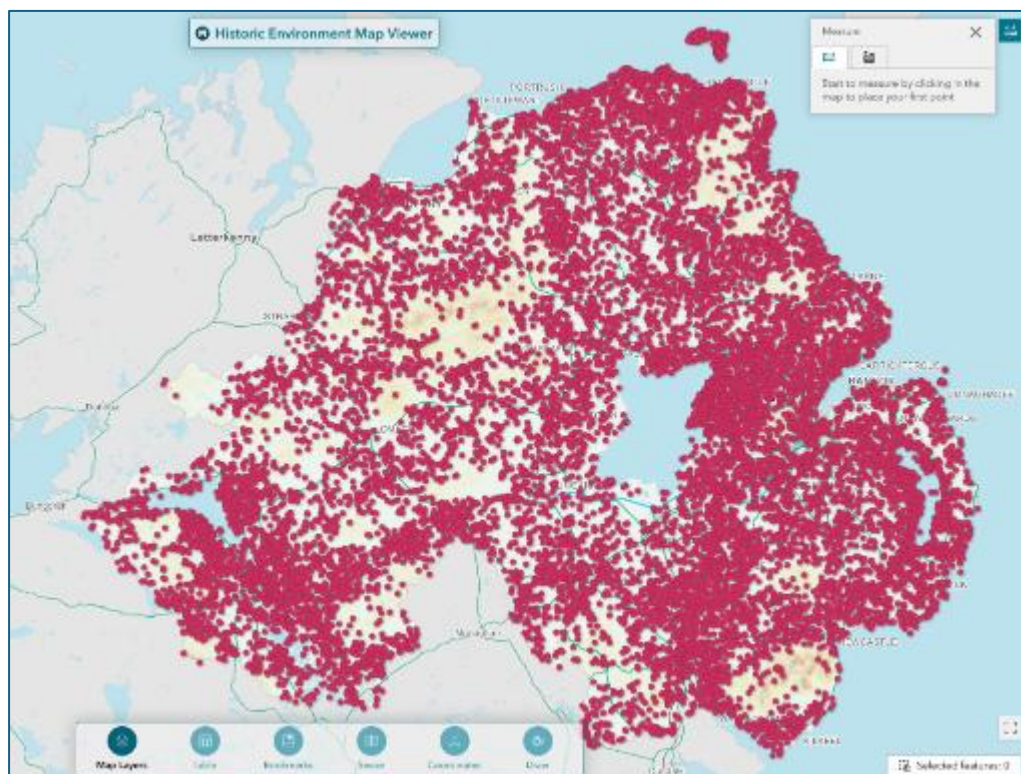
- NI Heritage Core Skills Group and NI Heritage Skills Reference Group meet quarterly
- Work is underway to establish HED as a ‘Traditional Skills Centre of Excellence’ - including recent recruitment to HED’s Conservation Works Team
- King’s Foundation/All-Ireland Heritage Skills Programme 2026-30 – work is ongoing to support new apprentices in heritage skills
- A Potential All-island skills centre is not yet off the ground.
- CITBNI CRESI project 2022-25 - training and events, the seeking of financial support through the development of bids, the long-term aim of establishing a viable way of delivering heritage training on an ongoing basis – project ends this year (2025).

⁵¹ [f11c5d88-3ad7-42da-b3a3-ad0e38063fc1.pdf](#)

The images below give an indication of the breadth and location of some types of Historic Assets in Northern Ireland (see also further assets under later SEA Topics).

Fig 2 – Sites and Monuments – HERoNI HED Map Viewer⁵² (Crown Copyright)

- 18,222 Sites and Monuments
- 2053 Scheduled Historic Monuments
- 186 Monuments in State care



⁵² [Historic Environment map viewer](#) | Department for Communities

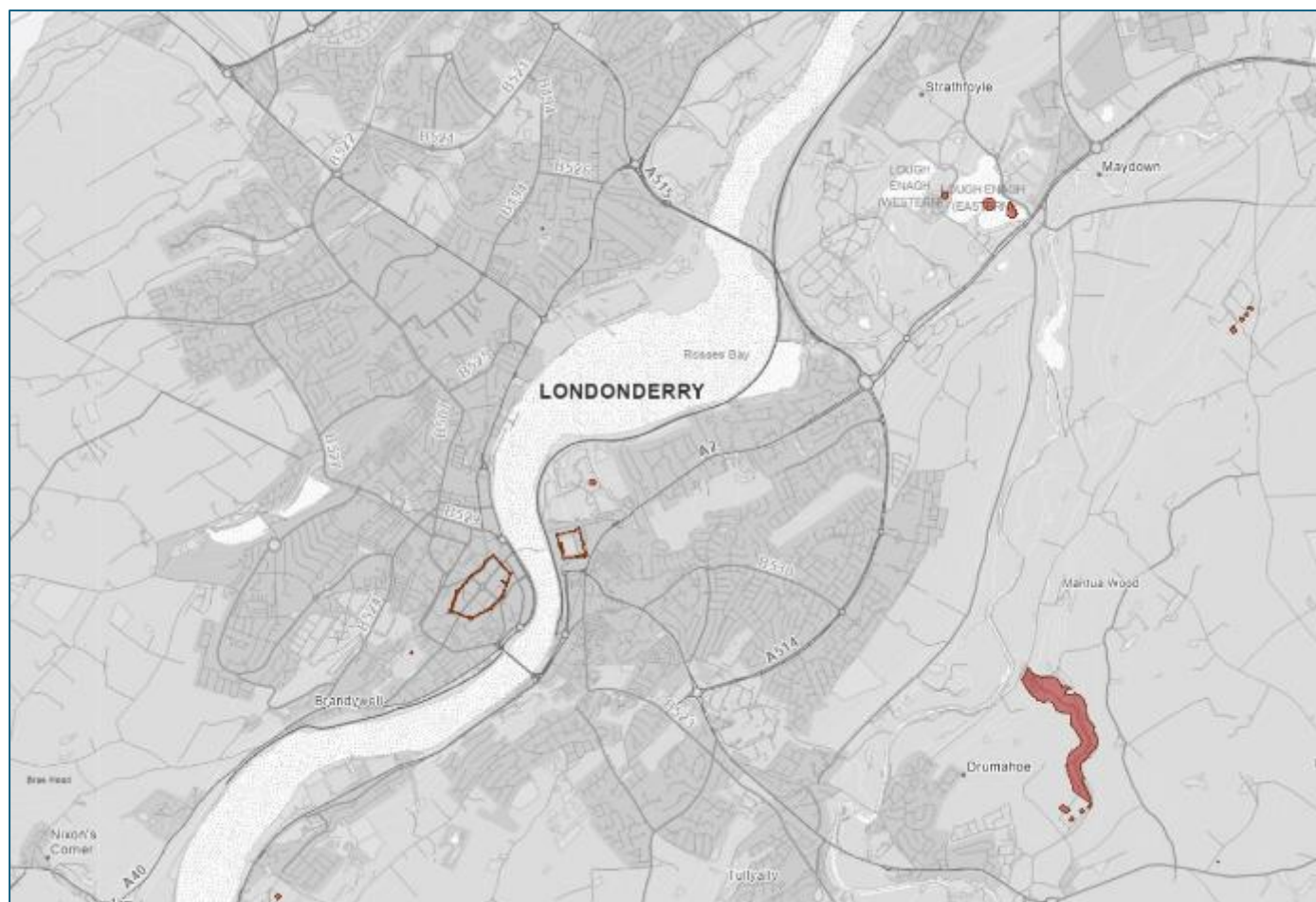
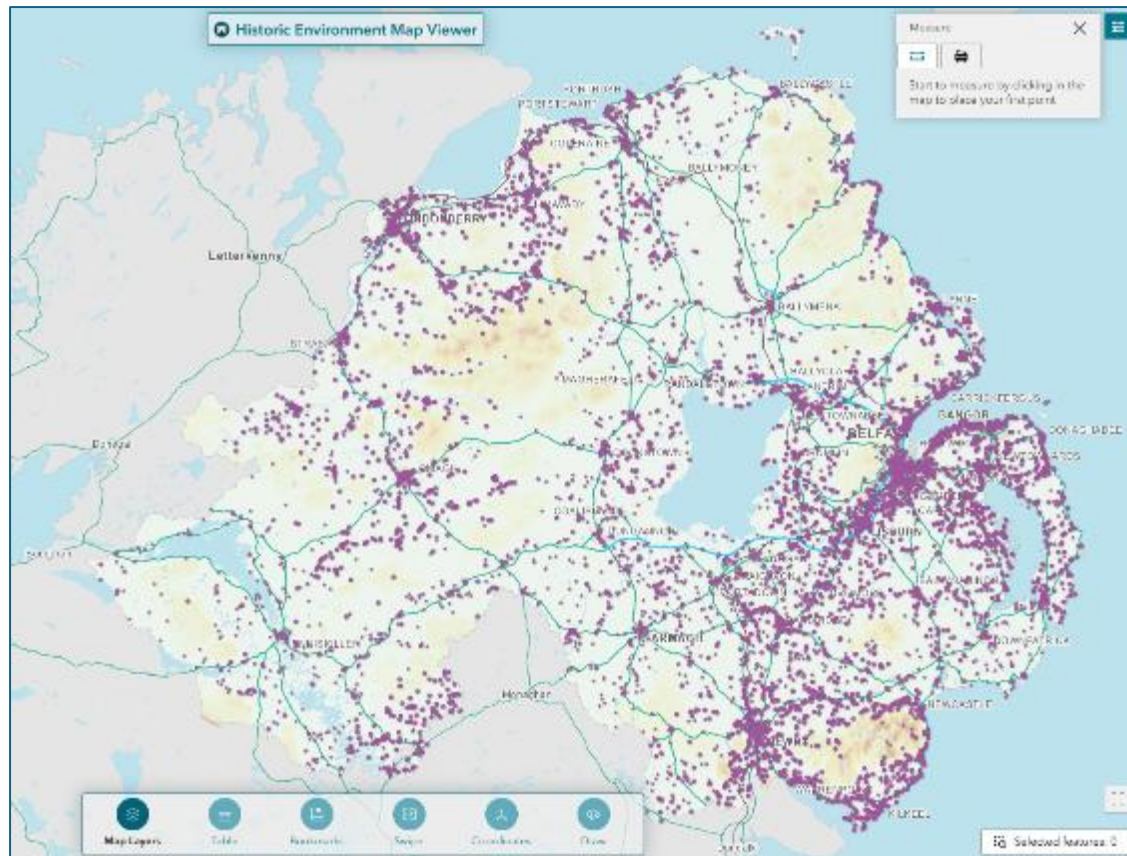


Fig 3 – Map showing example of scheduled zones in Derry~Londonderry – HERoNI HED Map Viewer (Crown Copyright HED). These scheduled areas are found across all of NI.⁵³

⁵³ [Archaeological sites and monuments | Department for Communities](#)

Fig 4 – Historic Buildings (Listed and Non-listed with a survey record are shown) – HERoNI HED Map Viewer (Crown Copyright)

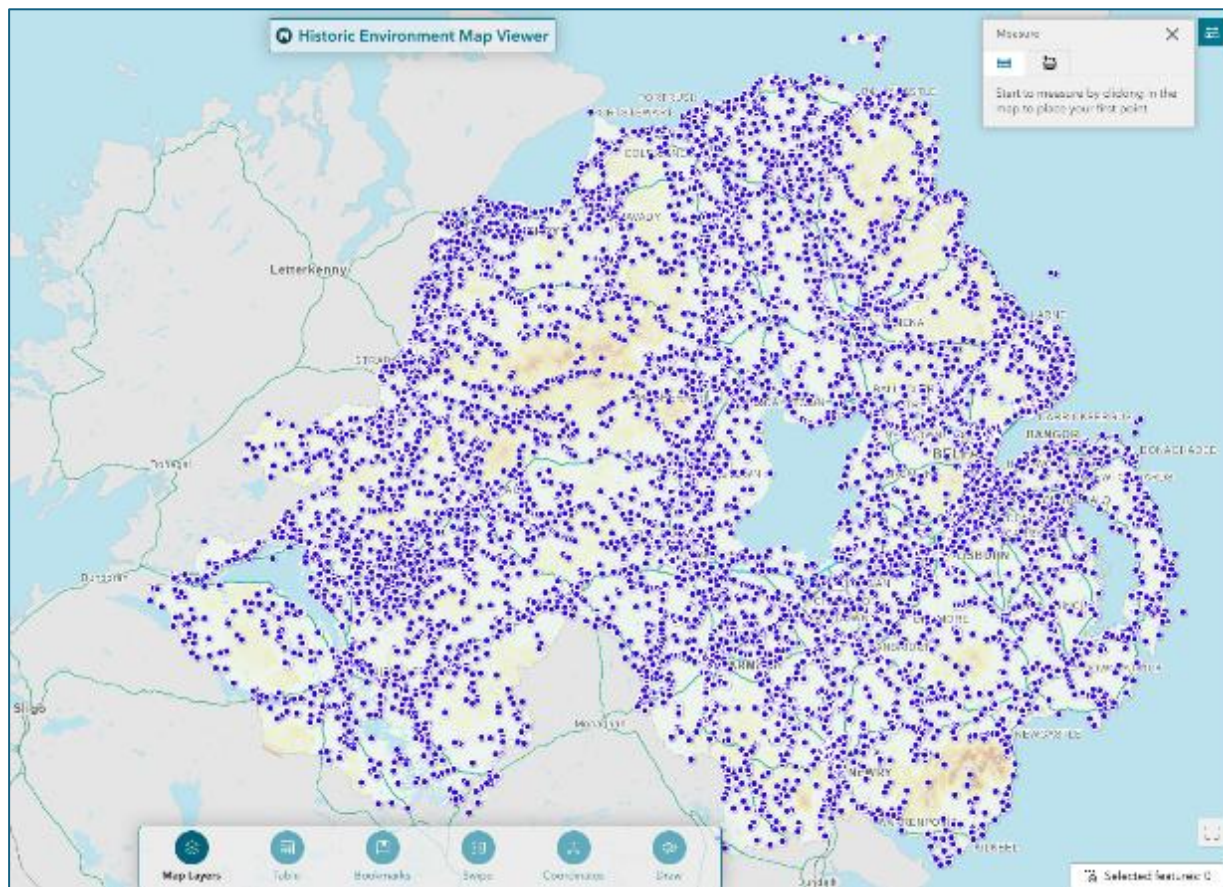
- 16,321 Historic buildings worthy of recording
- 9124 Listed Buildings⁵⁴



⁵⁴ [Listed Buildings | Department for Communities](#)

Fig 5 – Industrial Heritage Assets⁵⁵ – HERoNI HED Map Viewer (Crown Copyright)

- 16,648 sites on the Industrial Heritage Record (12,663 (24%) protected by formal designation)



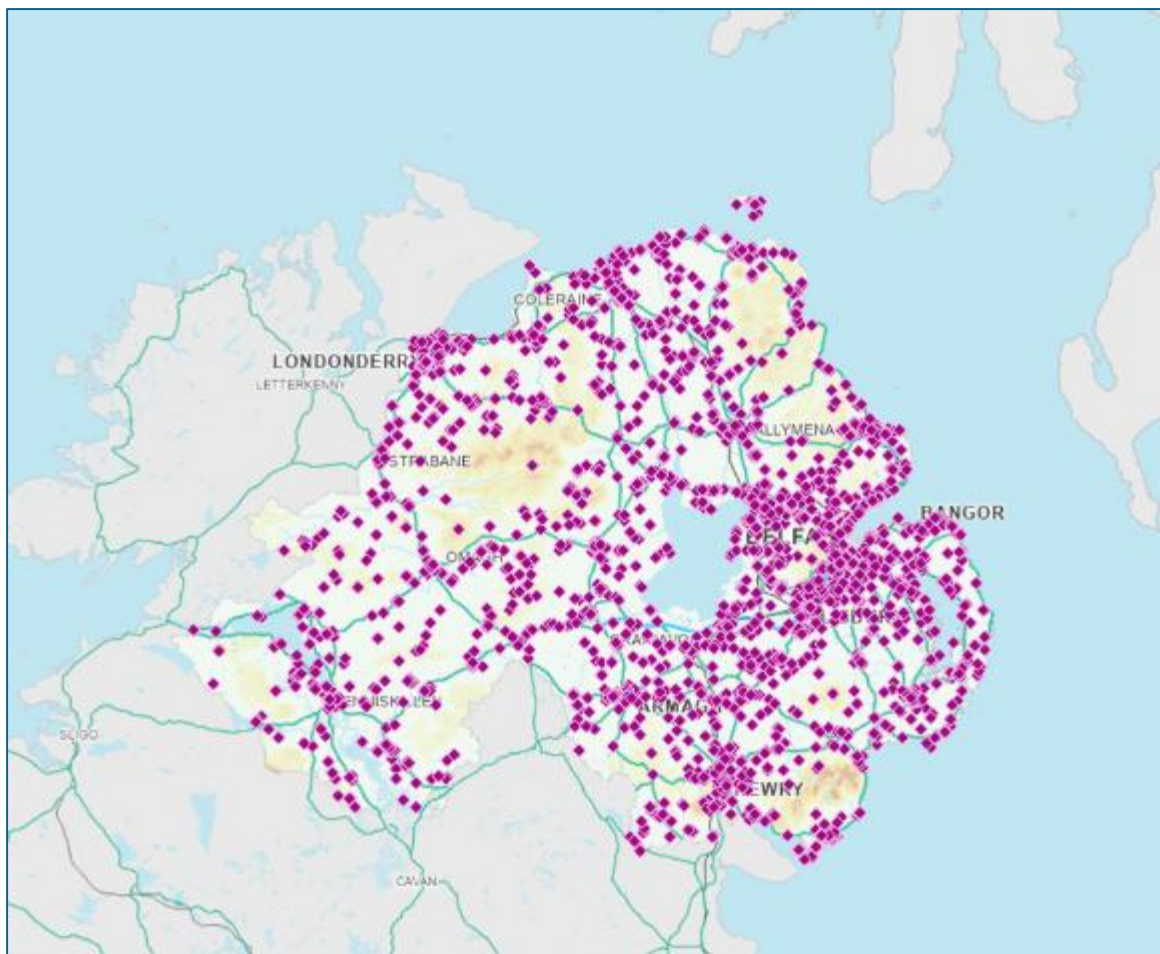
⁵⁵ [Industrial Archaeology | Department for Communities](#)

Fig 7 – Map showing Defence Heritage⁵⁷ – HERoNI HED Map Viewer (Crown Copyright)



⁵⁷ Defence Heritage | Department for Communities

Fig 8 – Map showing Locations of Archaeological Excavations⁵⁸ in NI – HERoNI HED Map Viewer (Crown Copyright)



⁵⁸ [Archaeological excavation and survey | Department for Communities](#)

4.2.2 Material Assets - Environmental problems

Condition

- In the Survey on the Condition of Listed Buildings⁵⁹ carried out (2023/24), the overall condition of the majority of buildings appears to have suffered a 24.4% worsening in 20 years
- In the Thatch Survey carried out in 2023, Condition of one quarter of all thatched buildings was poor or very poor: V poor 17%, Poor 8%, Average 22%, Good 30%, v good 23%.
- ‘The Conservation Deficit⁶⁰’ – owners of buildings and monuments are aware of the importance of conserving heritage assets but not willing to incur private financial loss; assistance from government is required to encourage private owners to maintain listed buildings and scheduled monuments.
- There are over 500 listed buildings availing of the zero-rating for vacant heritage assets on the LPS database. Vacant listed buildings are presently exempt from payment of rates and there is no requirement currently to ensure that these buildings are maintained or insured.
- Heritage at Risk in Northern Ireland (HARNI)⁶¹ has doubled in the last decade. This encompasses a variety of issues including:
 - fire/vandalism (unsecure assets)
 - vacancy
 - threat of demolition due to a preference for new build
 - perception of funding and practical challenges with heritage projects
 - lack of investment in maintenance
 - Skills shortages for specialist maintenance
- The current (March 2025) figure of 1,148 buildings on the Heritage at Risk register (HARNI) is just over double the 527 structures recorded in 2018/19. This is a very stark figure. It is also a growing inventory of untapped potential.
- There are a further 33 historic monuments on the HARNI register (as of March 2025). (Around a further 60 may be eligible at Autumn 26).

⁵⁹ [Survey on the Condition of Listed Buildings | Department for Communities](#)

⁶⁰ Due to the higher than average cost of maintaining and repairing heritage assets, the cost incurred by owners to care for heritage assets often does not equal the return on that investment. Owners of buildings and monuments are aware of the importance of conserving heritage assets but not willing to incur private financial loss for non-monetary benefits or gains which are societal and not personal. The term ‘Conservation Deficit’ is used to describe this situation which is directly proportional to property values.

⁶¹ The majority of assets on this register are listed buildings. Some unlisted historic buildings of local interest (mainly in Conservation Areas) and some historic monuments are also included. [Heritage at Risk | Department for Communities](#)

- There are 1366 Central Government Owned Buildings, of which 5.7% are on the Heritage at Risk Register⁶².
- The Condition and Management Survey of the Archaeological Resource Northern Ireland (CAMSAR)⁶³ was conducted in 2004 and 2005, with some minor revision in 2007. This survey has not been repeated since 2007. There is potential that to update the findings could then been used as a 'benchmark' against which future analysis and management strategies could be monitored and then developed.

Key findings at the time of the survey were that:

- Only 7% of the archaeological sites and monuments in the sample were found to be 100% complete or substantially complete.
- Sites and monuments located on arable, improved grassland and within urban areas have the worst rates of survival and are in the poorest condition.
- Sites and monuments located on unimproved grassland, within woodland and within wetlands generally survive well and are preserved in a fair, good or excellent condition.
- Over 90% of the sites and monuments that have been specially protected through State Care, Scheduling, or Agri-environment agreement can be shown to have survived well.
- It was demonstrated that uncontrolled new-built development and certain agricultural activities, particularly heavy grazing and the practice of improving grassland, are the most destructive factors affecting the archaeological resource in Northern Ireland.

⁶² [The Protocol for the Care of the Government Estate](#)

⁶³ [CAMSAR_Report.pdf](#)

Fig 9 HARNI (Heritage at Risk)⁶⁴ Northern Ireland – ‘at risk’ (yellow) and ‘saved’ (green) and ‘unlisted, demolished’ (red) are shown – HERoNI HED Map Viewer (Crown Copyright)



⁶⁴ [Heritage at Risk | Department for Communities](#)

Funding / Support

- Government funding for listed buildings and monuments fell sharply from £3–4m (2011–2015) to £0–320k (2016–2023) (HED), contributing to worsening neglect and a sense of areas “being left behind.” Limited annual budgets make capital projects difficult, leading to missed opportunities.
- The 2023 Culture, Arts and Heritage Taskforce Report⁶⁵ highlighted an ongoing funding crisis, with organisations “doing more with less.”
- A widespread conservation deficit⁶⁶ means that, outside affluent areas, repair and reuse of heritage assets is often not financially viable, especially following economic downturns.

Governance

- Heritage remains marginalised in high-level government investment planning and is absent from the Programme for Government, despite its potential to contribute to key outcomes.
- Although the UK has ratified multiple international conventions on protecting and enabling access to cultural heritage, Northern Ireland has never had a dedicated Historic Environment Policy, meaning obligations are only partially met.
- A policy framework is required to clarify how heritage management aligns with statutory duties, sustainable development, and wider social and economic goals.

Protection

- Listed buildings experienced an average of 4 fires per year (2018–2024) (HED) rising to 8 fires in 2025.
- Storage conditions for parts of Northern Ireland’s archaeological collection fall below standards required under the Valetta Convention, and survey work to maintain a complete record has largely paused.
- Heritage regulation is widely misunderstood; statutory consultations are often viewed as obstructive, reinforcing misconceptions that consents delay development.
- Reduced resources for surveying and designation mean assets are often identified only when applications for alteration or removal are made, causing further delays and negative perceptions.
- Enforcement of heritage legislation and planning policy is under-resourced, creating a fragmented and ineffective regulatory environment.

⁶⁵ [Investing in Creative Delivery – A report from the Culture, Arts & Heritage Strategy Taskforce | Department for Communities](#)

⁶⁶ Due to the higher than average cost of maintaining and repairing heritage assets, the cost incurred by owners to care for heritage assets often does not equal the return on that investment. Owners of buildings and monuments are aware of the importance of conserving heritage assets but not willing to incur private financial loss for non-monetary benefits or gains which are societal and not personal. The term ‘Conservation Deficit’ is used to describe this situation which is directly proportional to property values.

Local Places

- Although councils have the power to create local lists, none have done so.
- The number of heritage assets transferred through Community Asset Transfer (CAT) is not monitored. Funding to support community ownership is also less accessible in Northern Ireland and is under review.
- Falling congregation numbers mean more churches are likely to become redundant, increasing vacancy, dereliction, and the loss of important shared community spaces.
- Only four of eleven district councils have dedicated Heritage Development Officers, compared with full coverage in ROI, where councils also employ Conservation Officers, Vacant Homes Officers, and in-house architectural teams with conservation expertise. This integrated model—successful in places such as Waterford—demonstrates how local heritage expertise can strengthen decision-making, regeneration, and cross-departmental investment.
- Listing decisions are often contested at council level, and the listing process itself is not well understood outside central government. Listing should be treated as a distinct process focused on identifying special interest, while planning decisions (under the Planning Act (NI) 2011) determine changes of use.
- Many monuments, historic parks and gardens serve as focal points for community identity, yet decision-making over these local assets typically remains with central government.
- While all NI Government Departments employ Heritage Officers and report against the Protocol for the Care of the Government Estate, 5.7% of the Government historic estate is on the HARNI register (Jan 2026). Despite NI Executive recommendations in 2011, no council has adopted the Protocol’s reporting mechanism, though some apply its principles through Heritage Plans.

Skills, Capacity and Maintenance Challenges

- Survey results⁶⁷⁶⁸ show a significant shortage of skilled conservation labour in Northern Ireland: 56% of listed building owners report difficulty finding skilled builders, 67% cite the cost or availability of suitable contractors or materials as a barrier, and 21% find it difficult to source skilled labour; the same proportion applies to scheduled monument owners. These findings indicate a weak private market for heritage skills and a limited pool of conservation-skilled workers.
- Unlike England and Scotland, NI has no heritage skills strategy, no Heritage Sectoral Partnership (DfE), and no structured career pathways. Existing Sectoral Partnerships in NI lack heritage sub-groups, and the sector suffers from “dying trades,” too few Heritage Development

⁶⁷ [Listed Buildings Survey](#)

⁶⁸ [Market Failure Analysis of the Heritage Sector in Northern Ireland](#)

Officers, and limited project-leadership capacity. There is also insufficient data on the economic or social value contributed by heritage volunteers, and heritage is not referenced in the Programme for Government as contributing to a sustainable economy.

- The AREA Report (SIB)⁶⁹ highlighted structural barriers to adaptive re-use and called for reform of heritage frameworks to enable sensitive adaptation, noting that the sector remains under-resourced across all levels. Preventative maintenance—shown by Historic England⁷⁰, to reduce long-term repair costs by 15–20%—is hampered in NI by low funding availability, contributing to accelerating decline and wider market failure.
- Government Heritage Officers also report persistent maintenance budget shortfalls in the Protocol for the Care of the Government Historic Estate (2021, 2023).
- The condition of listed buildings has declined markedly over the past 20 years⁷¹, and monument owners face similar challenges. Surveys show owners understand the importance of heritage but are unable to absorb private financial loss, indicating the need for government support. A lack of accessible maintenance guidance is also noted.
- Within State Care, 20% of sites have significant condition issues; 47 of 186 are not publicly accessible, and several high-potential sites remain closed. Nearly a fifth require maintenance.
- The CITBNI (2018) report confirmed growing demand for traditional materials but widespread shortages of the skills required to use them. It identified gaps across trades, contractors, professionals, and clients, recommending increased grant support, accreditation requirements, and dedicating part of repair funding to skills development.
- Engagement for the HCC Programme reaffirmed widespread needs:
 - succession and maintenance skills across buildings, monuments, landscapes, graveyards and HPGs;
 - archaeological skills shortages;
 - absent heritage career pathways;
 - fundraising, project management, leadership, interpretation, digital skills, community project skills;
 - and future requirements for conservators, archivists, curators and interpreters.

⁶⁹ [AREA-Report-2024.pdf](#)

⁷⁰ [The Role of Maintenance and Repair in a Low Carbon Future | Heritage Counts | Historic England](#)

⁷¹ [Market failure in heritage | Department for Communities](#)

4.3 Part 3 – Places - HE Policy Impact

SEA topic	SEA Objective
Material assets	create places, spaces and buildings that work well, wear well and look well

4.3.1 Potential impact of HE Policy on Places

- Implementation of HE Policy is unlikely to generate significant negative effects on Northern Ireland’s material assets.
- The historic environment underpins much existing infrastructure—such as bridges, rail structures and canals—and conserving these assets **strengthens place-making, particularly where infrastructure faces increased climate-related inundation.**
- HE Policy can optimise the reuse of previously developed land, buildings and existing infrastructure.
- Heritage assets can be identified, protected and enhanced through Local Development Plans currently under preparation. HE Policy will act as a **material consideration in planning, shaping Local Development Plans, Community Plans and Heritage Plans** to promote regeneration through reuse, and to position heritage assets and landscapes as distinctive focal points for communities.
- **Well-maintained heritage assets support high-quality place-making**, while neglect undermines local character, wellbeing and community cohesion.
- The skills and traditional materials required to maintain and reuse historic assets **contribute to a sustainable economy**, offering opportunities to promote locally sourced, sustainable materials.
- Re-use of historic buildings and infrastructure **supports climate action, aligning with circular economy and zero-waste principles.**
- Plans should establish a positive strategy for **conserving and enjoying the historic environment**, including assets most at risk from neglect, decay or other threats, taking into account:
 - the desirability of **sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and ensuring that future uses remain viable and conservation-led;**
 - the **social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that arise from conserving the historic environment;**
 - the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to **local historic character and distinctiveness;** and
 - opportunities to draw on the historic environment to reinforce and **enhance the character and identity of a place.**

- Recent work to address town-centre vacancy and environmental challenges—such as Heritage Enabled Regeneration in Towns⁷²—highlights that:
 - Northern Ireland has higher town-centre vacancy rates than the GB average, yet retains a stronger mix of town-centre uses, making it well placed to **support town-centre living as a means of tackling dereliction and increasing footfall**.
 - Heritage-led regeneration can help **match existing buildings with current housing demand** and areas of housing stress.
 - **The Living High Streets Craft Kit**⁷³ (MAG) encourages community-led, co-designed approaches to high-street renewal.
 - Heritage-enabled regeneration models, such as Main Street America⁷⁴ and proposals by Belfast Building Trust⁷⁵, demonstrate the value of **building on existing assets and working collaboratively with communities and local businesses to reinforce sense of place**.
- DfC supports **heritage-focused regeneration** across programmes such as **City Deals**, the **Small Settlements Scheme**, and emerging **Neighbourhood Community Partnerships**, where heritage is recognised not only for its intrinsic value but as a core driver of community identity and place-making.
- There is an opportunity to **meet housing need with vacant buildings**, including vacant and underused historic buildings and first floor ‘over the shop’ living spaces in high streets.
- HE Policy can provide strategic support for participatory and community-led heritage management, strengthening **local stewardship and resilience**.
- Initiatives such as the Village Catalyst Grant Scheme⁷⁶ and Townscape Heritage Initiatives⁷⁷ demonstrate how heritage assets can **catalyse social growth, economic development and regeneration**, aligning community needs with central and local government objectives.
- These programmes also establish frameworks for **professional support, helping to build skills and capacity within community groups**.
- DfC’s **Anti-Poverty Strategy** and **Housing Strategy** emphasise the **re-use of historic buildings to support belonging, community cohesion and sustainable housing supply**, recognising the contribution of heritage assets to **visual amenity and attractiveness**.
- DfC’s **Shaping Sustainable Places**⁷⁸ identifies heritage as a key lever for regeneration and place-based transformation.

⁷² [Heritage Enabled Regeneration in Towns | Department for Communities](#)

⁷³ [MAG Living High Streets - craft kit | Department for Communities](#)

⁷⁴ [Main Street America :: Home](#)

⁷⁵ [About us - BBT](#)

⁷⁶ [Village Catalyst Pilot case studies | Department for Communities](#)

⁷⁷ [Townscape Heritage Initiative evaluation | The National Lottery Heritage Fund](#)

⁷⁸ [Consultation on Shaping Sustainable Places | Department for Communities](#)

- The Department of Justice has highlighted opportunities to **re-skill former offenders and young people**⁷⁹, for example through grounds maintenance and conservation work in historic landscapes and sites.

4.3.2 Potential Negative Impacts and Mitigation – Places

- **Potential effect:** Increased desire to occupy and use historic assets could pose a threat to their significance through inappropriate development.
- **Mitigation:** Through SPPS, planning controls such as Listed Building, Scheduled Monument and Conservation Area Consent, Local Development Plans, and Heritage Plans, checks should be in place to control inappropriate development. Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should be avoided or mitigated by robust policies and accessible, clear guidance.
- **Potential effect:** increased access to historic places may have a slight negative impact for example through increased traffic or footfall.
- **Mitigation:** This can be managed through development controls under the SPPS. The higher level of protection of the settings around heritage assets, provide a more stringent protection through development controls like Listed Building and Scheduled Monument consents, and the removal of permitted development rights associated with protected structures.
- **Potential effect:** demand for materials associated with conservation and restoration could have a negative effect on the environment
- **Mitigation:** the low carbon footprint of local indigenous materials, and the preferred approach of re-use and repair, often offsets any 'expenditure' when compared to new-build. This carbon calculation could become part of repair work specification; the exception to this is the use of hardwoods in conservation. Suggested mitigation may be to consider insisting that hardwoods come from a sustainable source. Schemes to re-use hardwoods such as Oak which have been felled through storm damage are already in place – for example Oak trees which fell on National Trust properties were used in the re-construction of the roof at Carrickfergus Castle. This potentially negative impact can be addressed through control of specification for repair projects, supported by policy. Conversely, demand for local materials could have a positive effect, e.g. the regenerative properties of materials used for repair, such as straw and wood (or hemp for insulation); and keeping existing quarries productive and viable rather than having to import stone.

⁷⁹ [Learning and skills | Department of Justice](#)

4.3.3 Likely Impact without HE Policy:

- Without HE Policy, opportunities to use the historic environment as a **resource for housing, regeneration and job creation**—including skills development in the heritage sector—may be lost.
- Without central policy support, the **maintenance and enhancement** of existing heritage assets to meet local needs (housing, business, community development) may not be prioritised in future planning strategies.
- Without a policy focus on **heritage skills**, the training and capacity needed to support sustainable development and a productive heritage economy may weaken further.
- Without HE Policy, continued **under-investment** is likely to accelerate the decline of the historic environment—raising energy demand in poorly maintained buildings and preventing the heritage sector from realising its wider economic, social and environmental benefits.
- Without HE Policy, and with few Heritage Plans or Heritage Officers in councils, the potential to create **well-designed, resilient and distinctive places** through the effective reuse of heritage assets may not be fully realised.

4.4 Part 4 - Suggested HE Policy Aims - Places

4.4.1 Policy Aim 1: Developing best practice to identify and safeguard our historic environment

Alternatives considered:	• Do nothing: Without targeted action, the historic environment would continue to decline. The 2025 Listed Building Condition Survey⁸⁰ showed a 24.4 percentage point deterioration over 20 years, with the rate of decline doubling between 2014–2024, while heritage buildings at risk have doubled since 2018⁸¹. This option would fail to meet the UK’s obligations under ratified international heritage conventions and would not prevent further deterioration of assets. • Rely on statutory, reactive management: Continuing “business as usual” would not address systemic issues. Between 2021 and 2023, 56 enforcement cases were referred to councils, but many did not progress. Councils rarely issue Urgent Works Notices or Buildings Preservation Notices, citing limited funding and expertise. Since 2015, councils have not routinely monitored or reported heritage enforcement activity. This approach would leave assets vulnerable. • Delegate full heritage responsibility to councils: Given current capacity constraints, limited specialist staff, and inconsistent enforcement, this option would be unable to deliver the level of protection required under international conventions. • Support councils to produce local Heritage Plans: While desirable, councils currently lack the resources and expertise to implement such plans effectively, and no reporting mechanism exists. On its own, this option would not fulfil national obligations or deliver consistent heritage protection.
Selection:	Policy Aim: Developing best practice to identify and safeguard our historic environment • A joint approach is required, combining central government leadership with local council support, investment, and clear reporting to ensure all elements of HE Policy work together effectively. • HE Policy will promote capacity-building, training and targeted funding to strengthen enforcement, improve compliance, and support best practice in heritage management.

⁸⁰ [Listed Buildings Survey](#)

⁸¹ The 2023/24 figure of 1,111 heritage assets on HARNI is just over double the 527 structures recorded in 2018/19.

	• A 10-year policy framework allows long-term, cumulative improvements to be made, enabling Northern Ireland to meet its international and legislative obligations and to reverse the decline in the historic environment through sustained, visible progress. • HE Policy will provide clear central leadership on the Northern Ireland Executive's approach to the historic environment, shaping future plans, strategies and the Programme for Government. While councils may continue to prepare local Heritage Plans, HE Policy will offer coherence, fill gaps and ensure consistent standards across all areas. • A single, NI-wide policy taken to public consultation provides an opportunity to gather a broad, representative understanding of public expectations and aspirations for heritage. • A long-term perspective is essential to realise and evidence the cumulative social, cultural and environmental benefits of HE Policy, including through future 5- and 10-year reviews. • Wider influencing factors—such as VAT, rates and fiscal incentives affecting vacancy and heritage at risk—require a robust, evidence-based policy platform to support long-term solutions. • Given public concerns about regulation, consideration may be given to future amendments to NI's heritage legislation to ensure it remains effective, proportionate and aligned with HE Policy objectives. • To ensure accountability, Government should publish regular heritage statistics, including measurable trends relating to Urgent Works Notices, BPNs, enforcement and other statutory obligations. • HE Policy will become a material consideration in planning, strengthening positive outcomes for the historic environment across the planning system.
Potential for Monitoring: HEADLINE METRICS	PROTECTION – PfG Wellbeing indicator - BRIGHTER FUTURES • Headline statistic: Number of designated heritage assets in NI as reported in the Northern Ireland Environmental Report - • NUMBER AND TREND (% annual increase or decrease) ○ Number of Scheduled Historic Monuments (DfC) ○ Number of listed buildings (DfC) ○ Number of Monuments in State Care (DfC) ○ Number of Conservation Areas (DfI)) ○ Number of protected wrecks (DfC) ○ Number of HPGs A* • Overall Condition of scheduled monuments (as reported for a selection between Field Monument Warden visits) - TREND (% increase or decrease good or very good between cycles of visits)

	Overall condition of Listed Buildings (as statistically recorded at 10 year intervals by DfC) TREND (% 10 year increase or decrease good or very good)
Potential for Monitoring: SUPPORTING METRICS	PROTECTION - Number of Monuments (DfC) - Numbers of BPNs per council per year (DfC) CONDITION - New Stat - Overall Condition of thatched buildings in Northern Ireland. (Thatch condition survey) - TREND (% 10yr monitoring increase or decrease good or very good) (DfC) - Total number of scheduled monuments on HARNI register (DfC) - Number of LB entries on the Heritage at Risk register (UAH/DfC) - Total number of unlisted buildings on HARNI (UAH/DfC) - Amount invested in maintenance annually Historic Environment Fund (DfC) - FIGURE AND TREND - New Stat - Number of Vacant Listed Buildings on High Streets (from HARNI) - New Stat - No. Local Listings - New Stat - Amount of rates missed through vacant listed buildings SAFEGUARDING - Number of fires in Listed Buildings - NUMBER and TREND - Nos demolitions in CAs (DfI) % CAs with article 4s (DfI) - State Care Incidents DfC HED records - NUMBER and TREND (Dilapidation) Number of Urgent Works Notices served by Councils - NUMBER and TREND - Number of active Enforcement cases - Monuments - NUMBER and TREND - Number of active Enforcement cases - Listed Buildings - NUMBER and TREND - Number of active Enforcement cases - Conservation Areas - NUMBER and TREND - Statutory Planning Consultations DfC HED records (DfI)- NUMBER AND TREND (% on time) - Non Statutory Planning Consultations DfC HED records - % on time - NUMBER and TREND - Listed Building Consent Consultations DfC HED records - % on time - NUMBER and TREND - EIA Consultations DfC HED records % on time - NUMBER and TREND - Marine Licencing Consultations DAERA MFD records - NUMBER and TREND

	- Scheduled Monument Consent Applications DfC HED records (as published in NIESR) - NUMBER and TREND - Number of Archaeological Licences Issued (DfC HED records NIESR) - NUMBER and TREND - Number of HED Agri- Environment and Forestry Consultations (HED annual statistical return spreadsheet) - NUMBER and TREND		
Effects on SEA Objectives:	Material Asset	++	Best-practice safeguarding significantly improves condition and sustainable use of historic material assets
	Landscapes / Seascapes	++	Protecting heritage assets strongly enhances landscape distinctiveness and scenic value.
	Population / Health	++	Engagement with historic environments supports wellbeing; long-term protection benefits communities and individuals.
	Climatic Factors	++	Retention and reuse of buildings, peatland recovery and protected settings support climate mitigation and resilience.
	Biodiversity, Flora, Fauna	++	Protecting heritage landscapes supports habitats, biodiversity and natural systems.
	Air, Soil and Water	+	Safeguarding buildings and settings maintains environmental quality and avoids negative impacts.
	Cultural Heritage	++	Long-term protection strongly benefits cultural heritage, especially assets at risk from neglect or climate change.

4.4.2 Policy Aim 2: Developing a highly skilled workforce to conserve and sustainably develop our historic environment

Alternatives:	• Do nothing: Without action to develop heritage skills, NI’s historic environment will continue to deteriorate. The 2025 Listed Building Condition Survey⁸² showed a 24.4 percentage point decline over 20 years, with the rate of deterioration doubling in the last decade, and vacant heritage buildings doubling since 2018⁸³. This option would fail to meet the Government’s obligations under international conventions and would not prevent continued decline. • Focus solely on heritage apprenticeships: While apprenticeships are important, they cannot address the full range of skills needed. Evidence from CITBNI (2018) and the Heritage Stakeholder Group (2023) shows that NI requires a broader skills ecosystem, including: ○ clear standards and specifications ○ social clauses requiring heritage skills training ○ timelines for contractors to employ fully qualified staff ○ recognition that many heritage skills are also needed across the wider culture and arts sector (e.g., specialist joinery for film sets) ○ stronger advocacy and communication with developers ○ development of non-construction skills, such as conservation, interpretation and project management and also the skills needed to manage heritage assets. ○ A narrow focus on apprenticeships would not meet the sector’s wider needs or fulfil Government obligations under international conventions.
Selection:	Policy Aim: Developing a highly skilled workforce to conserve and sustainably develop our historic environment • A skilled heritage workforce is essential to discover, maintain, conserve and manage the historic environment. A strong skills base can create long-term career pathways, support apprenticeships⁸⁴ leading to recognised qualifications, and attract talent into a growing sector. Many heritage skills are also highly transferrable across the wider construction industry⁸⁵, contributing to a more sustainable economy by “stimulating demand, stimulating the skills need and thus stimulating training need.”

⁸² [Listed Buildings Survey](#)

⁸³ The 2023/24 figure of 1,111 heritage assets on HARNI is just over double the 527 structures recorded in 2018/19.

⁸⁴ [Skills Barometer 2021 update | Department for the Economy](#)

⁸⁵ Construction Survey published by the Construction Employers Federation (CEF) – the top four priorities:

- Attracting new entrants by promoting construction careers in schools and communities

	- Focusing on a highly skilled workforce requires a long-term, layered plan to build a sustainable heritage skills ecosystem. Developing these skills supports the historic environment, strengthens lifelong learning, and contributes to economic growth and employment. In turn, enhanced skills will support cultural heritage, the condition of material assets, and the creation of high-quality places, improving wellbeing across Northern Ireland. <i>A circular economy emphasises the use of renewable, non-toxic, non-polluting and biodegradable materials with the least life-cycle impacts. These key features of a circular economy resonate with the guiding principles of heritage conservation.⁸⁶</i>
Potential for Monitoring: HEADLINE METRICS	SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY - SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT New Stat - The number of people employed in the heritage sector in Northern Ireland - NUMBER AND TREND (% annual increase or decrease) (DfE)
Potential for Monitoring: SUPPORTING METRICS	EMPLOYMENT - New Stat -Number of construction sector jobs associated with heritage (CITBNI/DfE Heritage Sectoral Partnership) - New Stat -No.s conservators, museums, archive, etc - (Defined by agreement - Heritage Sectoral Partnership) - New Stat -Number of thatchers active in NI (DfC) - No.s registered heritage guides in NI – (Tourism NI) - New Stat ..Number of Heritage volunteers – VCU – research joint between HED and VCU - and contribution to economy SKILLS - New Stat -The number of people newly qualified in the Heritage Sector– as a figure and trend (CITBNI/DfE Heritage Sectoral Partnership) - NUMBER and TREND - New Stat -Number of heritage skills apprentices in NI (CITBNI/DfE Heritage Sectoral Partnership) - NUMBER and TREND CONSERVATION QUALIFICATION - New Stat - No.s in NI with conservation accreditation - RSUA Conservation Architects, IHBC, CAMS?, - NUMBER and TREND EVIDENCE OF SKILLS - New Stat - No.s repeat LBCs and SMC applications - NUMBER and TREND

- Identifying skills needs and providing specific training tailored to the industry
- Development of entry-level skills programmes
- Enhancing the understanding of routes into the construction industry

⁸⁶ [Heritage in a Circular Economy | Heritage Counts | Historic England](#)

Effects on SEA Objectives:	Material Assets	++	Developing essential heritage skills will significantly improve the preservation of material assets across NI and support sustainable demand for the materials needed to maintain them.
	Landscapes / Seascapes	++	A skilled heritage sector and lifelong learning ecosystem will strongly enhance the conservation and quality of historic landscapes and seascapes.
	Population / Health	++	Heritage skills create employment and learning opportunities. Strengthening the sector improves life chances, wellbeing and community resilience as asset condition improves
	Climatic Factors	+	Specialist skills are increasingly needed to adapt heritage assets to climate impacts and improve energy efficiency. These cross-sectoral skills support climate resilience beyond the heritage sector.
	Biodiversity, Flora, Fauna	+	Specialist skills—such as soft-capping of monuments—can help manage heritage assets in ways that support biodiversity and habitat protection.
	Air, Soil and Water	0	Developing heritage skills is unlikely to significantly affect air, soil or water, except in specific areas such as marine heritage skills.
	Cultural Heritage	++	Building a skilled heritage workforce will have a major positive effect on cultural heritage, improving conservation, survey, interpretation and long-term stewardship.

4.4.3 Policy Aim 3: Investing in the capacity of owners, volunteers and organisations to care for and use local historic assets to meet their needs

Alternatives:	• Do Nothing: Without government leadership, communities would lack coordinated support to use their heritage assets. This option offers no mechanism to improve collaboration between central and local government, the voluntary sector, and communities. Due to the existing conservation deficit⁸⁷, private development is often not viable and does not meet community needs; therefore, deterioration and underuse would continue. • Rely on external bodies (e.g. National Lottery): While the National Lottery Heritage Fund has strong expertise and can integrate arts and nature into community projects, its interventions are time-bound. Past initiatives such as THIs (Townscape Heritage initiatives) demonstrate the limitations of short-term, project-based funding. Longer-term strategic direction is required to deliver sustained community benefit
Selection:	Policy Aim: Investing in the capacity of owners, volunteers and organisations to care for and use local historic assets to meet their needs • HE Policy can encourage long-term, community-led use of heritage assets, supporting permanent and sustainable benefits for local areas. Initiatives such as <i>Adopting a Monument</i>⁸⁸ illustrate how communities can take an active role in the conservation, interpretation and stewardship of local sites, including State Care monuments. Through policy direction, Government can empower communities to collaborate, participate in community planning, support local tourism and business, strengthen identity, and gain new skills. • The renewal of Community Plans in 2030 presents an opportunity for HE Policy to act as a material consideration, aligning local priorities with heritage-led community development. • Evidence from <i>Heritage Enabled Regeneration in Towns</i> highlights that heritage-led regeneration reinforces a town's unique identity, retains existing buildings, supports environmental sustainability and works <i>with</i> communities—unlike external, imposed development that often fails to meet local needs. • HE Policy will serve as a material consideration in planning, supporting Local Council Planning Committees in protecting and making effective use of heritage assets, thereby delivering positive outcomes for people and places.

⁸⁷ [Market failure in heritage | Department for Communities](#)

⁸⁸ [Adopt a Monument | The Heritage Council](#)

Potential for Monitoring: HEADLINE METRICS	- Existing Stat - Total number of heritage assets on HAR saved – (places of deprivation, rural or urban places) - Proposed Stat - Number of Heritage Plans in Councils (NUMBER AND % OF ALL COUNCILS) - Could this be added to/ Covered by the aim ‘Investing in the care and re-use of our historic environment as a resource to drive regeneration’		
Potential for Monitoring: SUPPORTING METRICS	- Existing Stat - Number of Heritage Officers in Councils (NUMBER AND % OF ALL COUNCILS) - Number of councils with Accredited Conservation Planners - New Stat - Number of Councils signed to Protocol for the Care of the Government estate (DfC) - New Stat - Number of faith heritage sites no longer in use (potential community assets) - Harnessing Heritage (AHF) – number of complete/live projects as a trend, geographical spread/areas of deprivation		
Effects on SEA Objectives:	Material Assets	++	Enabling communities to use and care for local heritage can help reverse decline, improve condition, and create high-quality places and spaces.
	Landscapes / Seascapes	++	Caring for and using cultural heritage enhances landscape and seascape character, especially in parks, gardens, countryside, harbours and coastal settings.
	Population / Health	++	Empowering communities to care for their places strengthens pride, autonomy and wellbeing. Quality places support better life chances and healthier communities.
	Climatic Factors	+	Re-use and repair of historic buildings reduce waste and whole-life carbon, while ongoing care improves resilience to climate impacts.
	Biodiversity, Flora, Fauna	+	Planned regeneration of historic places often protects surrounding natural spaces, supporting habitats and biodiversity as a positive side benefit.
	Air, Soil and water	?	Increased access may affect air, soil or water, but impacts are uncertain and can be mitigated through development controls such as the SPPS.
	Cultural Heritage	++	Supporting communities to care for and interpret heritage strengthens identity, cohesion and pride in place, delivering major benefits for cultural heritage.

4.4.4 Policy Aim 4: Empowering communities to adapt, enhance and re-use historic assets, drive regeneration and shape distinctive places

Alternatives:	• Short-timescale capital projects: Short-term funding delivers short-term, largely cosmetic improvements (e.g. shopfront painting) that do not address underlying issues such as roof failures or vegetation damage. These interventions tend to mask deeper problems rather than reverse long-term decline. • Medium-timescale capital projects: Heritage Lottery Townscape Heritage Initiatives (THIs) successfully delivered regeneration through capital works, skills, education and investment in towns such as Lurgan, Armagh and Carrickfergus. However, as a finite funding stream, THIs have ended, risking the loss of the skills, networks and momentum they created—an opportunity missed to maintain long-term regeneration benefits.
Selection:	Policy Aim: Empowering communities to adapt, enhance and re-use historic assets, drive regeneration and shape distinctive places • A 10-year, cross-government focus on using heritage to drive regeneration can support long-term, sustainable growth, including in deprived areas. Projects such as the Village Catalyst (e.g., Caledon Wool Store⁸⁹) show how heritage investment can stimulate wider regeneration beyond an individual site. • Sustainable regeneration often means caring for and re-using existing assets, making them focal points for community identity and activity. Many heritage assets—buildings, monuments, parks, gardens, pumps and traditional town-centre features—already sit at the heart of communities. Regeneration through reuse is often described as “turning a light back on.” • A combined “carrot and stick” approach—pairing support and funding with clear enforcement powers—can help councils drive good practice. Examples such as Lisburn & Castlereagh’s use of Urgent Works Notices alongside investment in shopfronts and building fabric demonstrate the value of long-term commitment to place. • <i>Heritage Enabled Regeneration in Towns</i> highlights the range of organisations involved in successful regeneration—local authorities, charities, social enterprises, private developers, Building Preservation Trusts and community-led partnerships. A consistent theme is the need for coordinated empowered collaboration at government and local levels.

⁸⁹ [The Woolstore | The Architectural Heritage Fund](#)

	• The same research concludes that heritage-led regeneration is most effective when delivered as part of a wider, place-based strategy, with multiple benefits: • Community/social: strengthened civic pride, shared spaces for daily needs, enhanced cohesion, increased town-centre use, greater local leadership capacity. • Economic: new uses (e.g., housing, workplaces) that generate footfall, encourage private investment and support local economies. • Environmental: reuse of existing buildings retains embodied carbon and can reduce car dependency through increased town-centre living. • Heritage-led regeneration has consistently created quality places and strengthened “pride of place,” leading to additional private investment. A future in which heritage-enabled development is the norm would mean finding viable new uses for existing assets and making it easier to deliver them⁹⁰. • With over 95% of Listed Building Consent applications approved⁹¹ in Northern Ireland, the existing planning system demonstrates that historic building consents generally <i>facilitate</i> rather than obstruct progress. • HE Policy will act as a material consideration in planning, strengthening positive outcomes for heritage, people and places.
Potential for Monitoring: HEADLINE METRICS	COMMUNITY WEALTH/PARTNERING WITH COMMUNITIES • New Stat - Number of CATs which are heritage buildings re-used per year NUMBER AND TREND (% annual increase or decrease) • Number of HARNI saves per year as a figure and trend for COMMUNITY USE– (DfC reported in EIP?) NUMBER AND TREND • New Stat - Number of community organisations in NI that are housed within or manage a historic building or monument. REGENERATION • Total number of heritage assets on HAR saved - NUMBER AND TREND (% annual increase or decrease) • Total number of heritage assets on HAR saved in areas of deprivation - NUMBER AND TREND (% annual increase or decrease) • Total number of heritage assets on HAR saved in rural vs urban areas - NUMBER AND TREND (% annual increase or decrease) Number of Government Owned HARNI saves per year as a figure and trend – (DfC reported in EIP?) NUMBER AND TREND

⁹⁰ DfC Placemaking group engagement session

⁹¹ [NI HERITAGE DELIVERS 2026 CASE STUDIES AND STATISTICS ON HOW HERITAGE BENEFITS NORTHERN IRELAND | Heritage Delivers](#)

Potential for Monitoring: SUPPORTING METRICS	• Total amount of lottery funding for heritage projects in areas of deprivation • Total amount of funding in Sustainable Settlements towards heritage led regeneration • Total amount of funding in City Deals towards heritage led regeneration • total %/amount/trend in DfC Regen budget towards heritage led regeneration • total %/amount/trend in DfC on Neighbourhood Community Partnerships		
Effects on SEA Objectives:	Material Assets	++	The historic environment can drive sustainable regeneration. HE Policy will support the reuse and enhancement of existing assets, helping to reverse decline and strengthen the quality and condition of material assets.
	Landscapes / Seascapes	++	Heritage-led regeneration benefits landscapes and seascapes, especially where cultural heritage forms part of coastal, rural or intertidal areas. Caring for existing assets reinforces local distinctiveness and reduces the need for carbon-heavy new development.
	Population / Health	++	Improvements to the condition and use of historic places enhance quality of place. Living in well-designed, cared-for environments supports wellbeing, pride in place and better life chances.
	Climatic Factors	+	Reusing existing buildings reduces whole-life carbon, supports adaptation to climate impacts and ensures conditions are monitored over time. Regeneration therefore contributes positively to climate mitigation and resilience.
	Biodiversity, Flora, Fauna	+	Regeneration that protects and manages the settings of historic places often benefits natural spaces, helping safeguard habitats around landscapes, monuments, gardens, graveyards and estates.
	Air, Water and Soil	?	Regeneration may increase access and traffic to historic places, but potential effects are uncertain and can be mitigated through planning controls such as the SPPS.
	Cultural Heritage	++	Heritage-enabled regeneration strongly supports cultural heritage by reusing assets, reinforcing identity and embedding cultural value within regenerated places.

4.4.5 Policy Aim (discounted): Maximising the role of councils, community and voluntary organisations in the promotion, protection and enjoyment of their heritage assets [To be amalgamated into alternative aim – Empowering communities]

Alternatives:	• Do-nothing – Northern Ireland does not have comparable Community Ownership legislation or Funding to other parts of the UK, known collectively as ‘community wealth building’. Although there is clear local appetite to reverse decline and make better use of community heritage assets—as seen through the Village Catalyst Scheme—only a small number of flagship projects have been possible, and current funding and resourcing remain limited. A “do-nothing” approach would fail to provide the strategic direction needed to integrate the protection and use of the historic environment across planning, development, tourism and local policy. As a result, opportunities to create a coordinated, place-based approach with multiple long-term benefits to communities would be lost.
Selection:	Policy Aim: Maximising the role of councils, community and voluntary organisations in the promotion, protection and enjoyment of their heritage assets • Heritage strengthens people’s connection to place and can support local economic prosperity^{92,93}. A high-level HE Policy can enable this by providing opportunities, training and support for community partners directly involved in the advocacy, investment and delivery⁹⁴ of heritage activity. • Local-level projects will be central to heritage-enabled regeneration. An overarching HE Policy can reinforce recognition of the value of heritage assets and support their owners within communities. • In places where historic buildings anchor high streets and neighbourhoods, mechanisms such as Community Asset Transfer⁹⁵ can empower communities to take control of underused or neglected structures, reversing decline and restoring their function as community assets. • Greater public involvement in policy-making, priority-setting and funding decisions can strengthen community ownership and capacity through community planning. • Supporting community networks and heritage owners through free-access initiatives—such as European Heritage Open Days—can widen engagement, awareness and celebration of local heritage. • Cross-sector collaboration between arts, libraries, museums and cultural organisations can further enhance opportunities for people to enjoy, use and value historic places through events, exhibitions and cultural programming.

⁹² [The Value of High Street Heritage Action Zones | Historic England](#)

⁹³ [Cultural Heritage, Creativity and the Creative Economy | Heritage Counts | Historic England](#)

⁹⁴ [Walled City Partnership Walled City Partnership, Derry, Historic Walls, Londonderry](#)

⁹⁵ [Community Asset Transfer - Development Trusts NI](#)

	• A national marketing strategy for Northern Ireland's heritage would help raise public understanding of the value of heritage, its contribution to pride in place, wellbeing, the economy and local identity. This aim could be be amalgamated into: • Investing in local capacity to care for and re-use historic assets, drive regeneration and shape distinctive places • Empowering communities, volunteers and organisations to use local historic assets to meet their needs And • Reaching out: supporting heritage education and activity for inspiration, learning and enjoyment.		
Potential for Monitoring: HEADLINE METRICS	N/A - see above		
Potential for Monitoring: SUPPORTING METRICS	N/A - see above		
Effects on SEA Objectives:	Material Assets	++	Enabling councils, community groups and volunteers to promote, protect and use heritage assets can significantly improve the condition of material assets. Support for reuse, maintenance and sustainable materials can help reverse decline, create high-quality places and support climate-friendly reuse of existing infrastructure.
	Landscapes / Seascapes	++	Community-led stewardship of heritage assets can strongly enhance landscape and seascape character, safeguarding distinctiveness and scenic value.
	Population / Health	++	Greater community involvement in caring for local heritage improves access, strengthens autonomy and pride in place, and enhances wellbeing through better-quality living and working environments.
	Climatic Factors	+	Supporting communities to reuse heritage assets reduces CO ₂ emissions by avoiding new construction and encouraging adaptation measures that respond to climate change.
	Biodiversity, Flora, Fauna	+	Caring for heritage places often leads to improved stewardship of surrounding natural spaces—gardens, monuments, graveyards and estates—helping to protect habitats and biodiversity.
	Air, Soil and water	?	Increased access to heritage sites could raise traffic or visitor pressures, but impacts are uncertain and can be mitigated through planning controls (e.g. SPPS).
	Cultural Heritage	++	Strengthening community, voluntary and council roles enhances the safeguarding of designated and undesignated heritage, including assets at risk, while deepening local identity and supporting identity

Natural Places

In this section, HE Policy is considered against Landscapes and Seascapes, Biodiversity, Flora & Fauna and Air, Water and Soil. These topics relate in a connected way to the historic environment, and therefore HE Policy Impact and objective(s) relating to the Natural Environment are brought together in Parts 3 and 4.

4.5 Landscapes and Seascapes

4.6 Part 1 – Landscapes and Seascapes – Relationship with other plans, strategies and programmes

SEA Topic – Landscapes and Seascapes

Protection

Relevant legislation:

- **Nature conservation and Amenity Lands Order (NI) 1985**
- **The Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017**
- **Planning Policy Statements (PPS – in particular PPS2 and PPS18). It should be noted that the PPS's will be superseded by Local Development Plans when they are adopted.**

and

- **Planning Act (NI) 2011**
- **Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects (Northern Ireland) Order 1995**
- **Protection of Military Remains Act 1986**
- **Protection of Wrecks Act, 1973**
- **Merchant Shipping Act 1995**
- **The Fisheries Act (Northern Ireland) 1966**
- **Treasure Act 1996**
- **UK Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009**
- **The Marine Act (NI) 2013**

International Convention, declaration or charter	Legislative basis, environmental objectives or requirements of the plan or programme	How objectives and requirements of other plans or programmes might be taken on board in Historic Environment Policy (HE Policy) or how HE Policy might impact other plans, policies or programmes	Impacts on HE Policy	HE Policy may impact outcomes
The European Landscape Convention (Florence, 2000) ⁹⁶	This convention is legally binding. The UK ratified this Convention in 2000. The Convention ‘ <i>requires us to recognize the important value of landscapes and to reconcile commercial considerations with the right to well-being, health, aesthetics and beauty. The convention establishes the general legal principles which should serve as a basis for adopting national landscape policies and establishing international cooperation in such matters. It defines a general framework for preserving and ensuring the quality of the landscape. The aim is to preserve the quality of life and well-being of Europeans with due regard for their natural and cultural heritage.</i> ’	Historic Environment Policy will support the aspiration set out in the Convention to consider natural and cultural heritage together, supporting their mutual protection within landscapes for the benefit and enjoyment of everyone.	✓	
The European Landscape Convention (ELC) ⁹⁷ – as applied in both Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland ⁹⁸ as the National Landscape	The ELC is the first international treaty dedicated to the protection, management and planning of all landscapes in Europe. ‘Signed by the UK government in 2006 and introduced in March 2007, the ELC provides a people-centred and forward-looking way to reconcile management of the environment with the social and economic challenges of the future, and aims to help people reconnect with place.’	The definition of Landscape as area(s) shaped by people aligns with the definition of the historic environment which incorporates ‘ <i>All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and deliberately planted or managed flora.</i> ’ Therefore the objectives set out in the ELC will align with HE Policy to preserve, protect and enhance the historic environment, in turn having a positive and inter-linked impact on landscapes.	✓	

⁹⁶ The European Landscape Convention (Florence, 2000)

⁹⁷ [The European Landscape Convention \(ELC\) - Landscape Institute](#)

⁹⁸ [N Landscape Strategy ENGLISH - inside.indd](#)

Strategy (2015-2025)⁹⁹	<i>The ELC contains 18 articles which, collectively, promote landscape protection, management and planning and organising European cooperation on landscape issues.</i> <i>Article 1 defines the terms used in the ELC. These include:</i> • <i>“Landscape” – an area perceived by people whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.</i> • <i>“Landscape policy” – an expression by the competent public authorities of general principles, strategies and guidelines that permit the taking of specific measures aimed at the protection, management and planning of landscapes.</i> • <i>“Landscape protection” – actions to conserve and maintain the significant or characteristic features of a landscape, justified by its heritage value derived from its natural configuration and/or from human activity.</i> • <i>“Landscape management” – action, from a perspective of sustainable development, to ensure the regular upkeep of a landscape, so as to guide and harmonise changes which are brought about by social, economic and environmental processes.</i> • <i>“Landscape planning” – strong forward-looking action to enhance, restore or create landscapes.</i>	Landscapes are shared and intervisible across borders; HE Policy will therefore also have a positive impact and benefit from the positive impacts of the Policies set out in the Republic of Ireland to support the ELC.		
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⁹⁹ [National Landscape Strategy](#)

	The Republic of Ireland signed and ratified the Council of Europe's European Landscape Convention (ELC) which came into effect on 1 March 2004. It obliges Ireland to implement policy changes and objectives concerning the management, protection and planning of the landscape in ROI.			
Other plan/programme or strategy	Legislative basis, environmental objectives or requirements of the plan or programme	How objectives and requirements of other plans or programmes might be taken on board in Historic Environment Policy (HE Policy) or how HE Policy might impact other plans, policies or programmes	Impacts on HE Policy	HE Policy may impact outcomes
Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS)¹⁰⁰	(SPPS) <i>policy objectives for development in the countryside are to:</i> • <i>manage growth to achieve appropriate and sustainable patterns of development which supports a vibrant rural community;</i> • <i>conserve the landscape and natural resources of the rural area and to protect it from excessive, inappropriate or obtrusive development and from the actual or potential effects of pollution;</i> • <i>facilitate development which contributes to a sustainable rural economy; and</i> • <i>promote high standards in the design, siting and landscaping of development.</i>	Historic Environment Policy will align with and expand on the Strategic Planning Policy Statement objectives. HE Policy will provide high level advice on Government's attitude to the historic environment which will influence the implementation of the SPPS (SPPS is based on protective legislation, however, it is guided by policy in practice.) HE Policy will contribute to the objectives to conserve landscape and natural resources, protecting it from inappropriate or obtrusive development. It will support development which contributes to a sustainable economy, and promotes high standards in design, siting and landscaping of development associated with heritage places and assets – therefore aligning with the SPPS aims to conserve, protect and enhance landscapes.	✓	✓

¹⁰⁰ [Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland \(SPPS\)](#)

Northern Ireland Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) ¹⁰¹	The preparation and publication of an Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) is a statutory duty placed upon the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) by Schedule 2 to the Environment Act 2021 (the Act), which came into force in July 2022 following Assembly approval. Northern Ireland’s EIP forms the basis for a coherent and effective set of interventions that can collectively deliver improvements in the quality of the environment. The strategic objectives of the EIP include: • A <u>healthy and accessible environment and landscapes</u> everyone can connect with and enjoy;	An action of the Northern Ireland Environmental Improvement Plan is to’ <i>Develop and implement a Culture Arts and Heritage Strategy which embeds environmental outcomes.</i>’ Historic Environment Policy is part of what was known as the ‘Culture Arts and Heritage Strategy’, now referred to as the ‘Heritage, Culture and Creativity Programme’. HE Policy will augment the EIP: through management and appreciation of the historic environment HE Policy supports to the EIP objectives to achieve healthy and accessible environment and landscapes everyone can connect with and enjoy which include cared for, accessible and better understood heritage assets.	✓	✓
Enriched Landscapes – Landscapes NI	Landscapes NI is the network of all the landscape management organisations in Northern Ireland. The Vision for the network is “Cherished landscapes benefiting people and nature in Northern Ireland”. To achieve this vision we have a mission to “work together to promote landscapes and associated policy and practice in Northern Ireland.” Enriched Landscapes is a manifesto, which depicts a ‘call to ensure the protection of landscape character and enhancement of these wonderful natural assets, for the benefit of nature, people and planet.’ The organisation’s goal is to ensure that Northern Ireland’s landscapes ‘<i>..remain a source of natural beauty and inspiration ...[and] remain deeply rooted in our collective psyche and sense of place.</i>’	HE Policy aligns with the objectives of enriched landscapes, supporting the contribution that the historic environment makes to landscapes, ‘<i>our collective psyche and sense of place.</i>’	✓	✓

¹⁰¹ [Environmental Improvement Plan for Northern Ireland | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

UK High Level Marine Objectives 2008 and UK Marine Policy Statement (MPS)¹⁰² and the Marine Plan for Northern Ireland (once adopted)¹⁰³	<i>‘The UK Marine Policy Statement (MPS) is the framework for preparing Marine Plans and taking decisions affecting the marine environment.’</i> <i>‘The Marine Plan for Northern Ireland will inform and guide the regulation, management, use and protection of our marine area. It is a single document made up of two plans, one for the inshore region and one for the offshore region.’</i> The objectives within these frameworks include ‘To promote the preservation and enjoyment of marine related heritage assets’.	Historic Environment Policy aims will align with the common objectives within these three directives, supporting Marine Policy to protect underwater and inshore heritage in Northern Ireland.	✓	✓
Towards an Integrated Coastal Zone Management Strategy for Northern Ireland 2006-2026¹⁰⁴ (DAERA)	<i>‘This strategy is intended to set out long-term objectives for achieving sustainable coastal management, through improvements to existing management systems, the development of new management systems and identifying and dealing with potential areas of conflict.’</i>	HE Policy will support the integrated approach of the strategy which points to cooperation between protection of terrestrial and marine heritage assets and biodiversity potential – underpinned by research and knowledge.	✓	✓
DAERA Policies to manage landscapes - natural, marine and rural environments	The legislative basis for the Department of Agriculture, the Environment and Rural Affairs’ actions is the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands Order (NI) 1985 (NCALO). Through this, DAERA designates the finest landscape areas as either Areas of Outstanding Natural	Historic Environment Policy will provide high level advice on Government’s attitude to the historic environment which will impact policy, plans and strategies created and actioned by DAERA to conserve ‘historic objects’ and historic landscapes which fall within the remit of DAERA’s policies.	✓	✓

¹⁰² [UK marine policy statement - GOV.UK](#)

¹⁰³ [Marine Plan for Northern Ireland | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

¹⁰⁴ [Towards an Integrated Coastal Zone Management Strategy for Northern Ireland 2006 - 2026 | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

	Beauty (AONB) or National Parks land and takes steps to manage them for both conservation and recreation. The purpose of designation is to make sure that policies are created and action carried out about: • conserving or enhancing the natural beauty or amenities of that area • conserving wildlife, <u>historic objects</u> or natural phenomena within it • promoting its enjoyment by the public providing or maintaining public access to it DAERA also manages ‘Cross-Compliance’.¹⁰⁵ The term Cross-Compliance refers to the requirement for farmers to comply with a set of Statutory Management Requirements (SMRs) and keep their land in Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC).	The remit for these actions will include the conservation of heritage assets which fall within designated habitats, and undesignated landscapes, seascapes, rural/agricultural landscapes and small settlements. DAERA’s policies to protect, conserve and use natural and man-made landscapes correlate with what will be HE Policy objectives. In March 2022, DAERA announced the publication of the Future Agricultural Policy. All land managers with three or more hectares of eligible agricultural land who meet the scheme requirements will be able to participate; participants will be required to comply with the new Farm Sustainability Standards and participate in the Soil Nutrient Health Scheme package will have an outcome based approach and will focus on creating and restoring habitats that are important for species diversity. Protected zones around monuments for example already make a strong contribution to this objective, but are not currently viewed in this light. HE Policy can support and suggest partnering with DAERA to support cross-compliance opportunities to protect and enhance heritage assets in farmland, forests, and woodlands.		
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¹⁰⁵ [Cross-Compliance | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

4.7 Part 2 – Landscapes and Seascapes - Environmental Characteristics

SEA topic	SEA Objective
Landscape	• protect and enhance the landscape everywhere and particularly in designated areas • value and protect diversity and local distinctiveness • improve the quantity and quality of publicly accessible open space

4.7.1 Landscapes and Seascapes - Existing Baseline

In Northern Ireland there are:

- Landscape Character Assessments carried out by DAERA recognise the contribution of cultural heritage to the character of landscapes and places.
- 60 Conservation Areas (CAs) in Northern Ireland.
- 8 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs)
- 16 landscape partnerships (collectively known as Landscapes NI)
- 24 Regional Seascape Areas
- 205 Area of Townscape Character (ATCs)
- 663 Historic Parks, Gardens or Demesnes (HPGs) Grade A and A*
- 324 battle sites
- 11 Areas of Significant Archaeological Interest
- 130 Local Landscape Policy Areas (LCAs)
- 403 Historic Nucleated Settlements

- With 80% of the 1.4 million hectares of land in Northern Ireland in agricultural use¹⁰⁶, a large proportion of archaeological heritage features are found on farmland¹⁰⁷. The protected zones around monuments serve as biodiversity ‘islands’ within agricultural landscapes.
- Much of Northern Ireland’s, nature, landscapes and cultural heritage exist in tandem. The historic environment co-exists with the natural environment in designed landscapes (including urban gardens, parks, demesnes, and rural vernacular/agricultural landscapes, harbours) and natural landscapes (such as protected zones around monuments and protected wrecks).
- Screening for Appropriate Assessment was carried out for HE Policy under the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended). This report concluded that many/most UK National Site Network Sites (both terrestrial and marine) are situated around, or near heritage assets and therefore situated within the zone of influence of HE Policy.
- The Independent Assessment used to help inform the third UK Climate Risk Assessment (CCRA3)¹⁰⁸ assesses 61 risks and opportunities from climate change to Northern Ireland, including to business, infrastructure, housing, the natural environment, our health and from the impacts of climate change internationally.
- Potential sources of data for the Northern Ireland marine area include:
 - Marine Mapviewer¹⁰⁹ - Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
 - Northern Ireland Environmental Statistics Report 2025¹¹⁰ - Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
 - Marine Strategy¹¹¹ - Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
 - NI Coastal Vulnerability Assessment Physical Assets¹¹² - Datasets - Open Data NI
 - Baseline Study and Gap Analysis of Coastal Erosion Risk Management NI¹¹³ - Department for Infrastructure
- In the Republic of Ireland, Natural Capital Accounting for Sustainable Environments is promoted by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as a method to understand the value of Nature¹¹⁴. Natural Capital Accounting provides a framework to track changes in the extent and condition of stocks of assets, and in the flows of services over time. This enables prioritisation and appropriate management of natural assets and the multiple benefits they provide to people, and valuation of assets in holistic terms. Ecosystem Services Mapping has similar potential. Man-made historic environment assets within natural landscapes could be included in this calculation for places if applied to NI.

¹⁰⁶ [Protecting historic monuments on farmland | Department for Communities](#)

¹⁰⁷ [Our Five Aims - Archaeology 2030](#)

¹⁰⁸ [Summary for Northern Ireland \(CCRA3-IA\) - UK Climate Risk](#)

¹⁰⁹ [Marine Mapviewer | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

¹¹⁰ [Northern Ireland Environmental Statistics Report 2025 | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

¹¹¹ [Marine Strategy | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

¹¹² [NI Coastal Vulnerability Assessment Physical Assets - Dataset - Open Data NI](#)

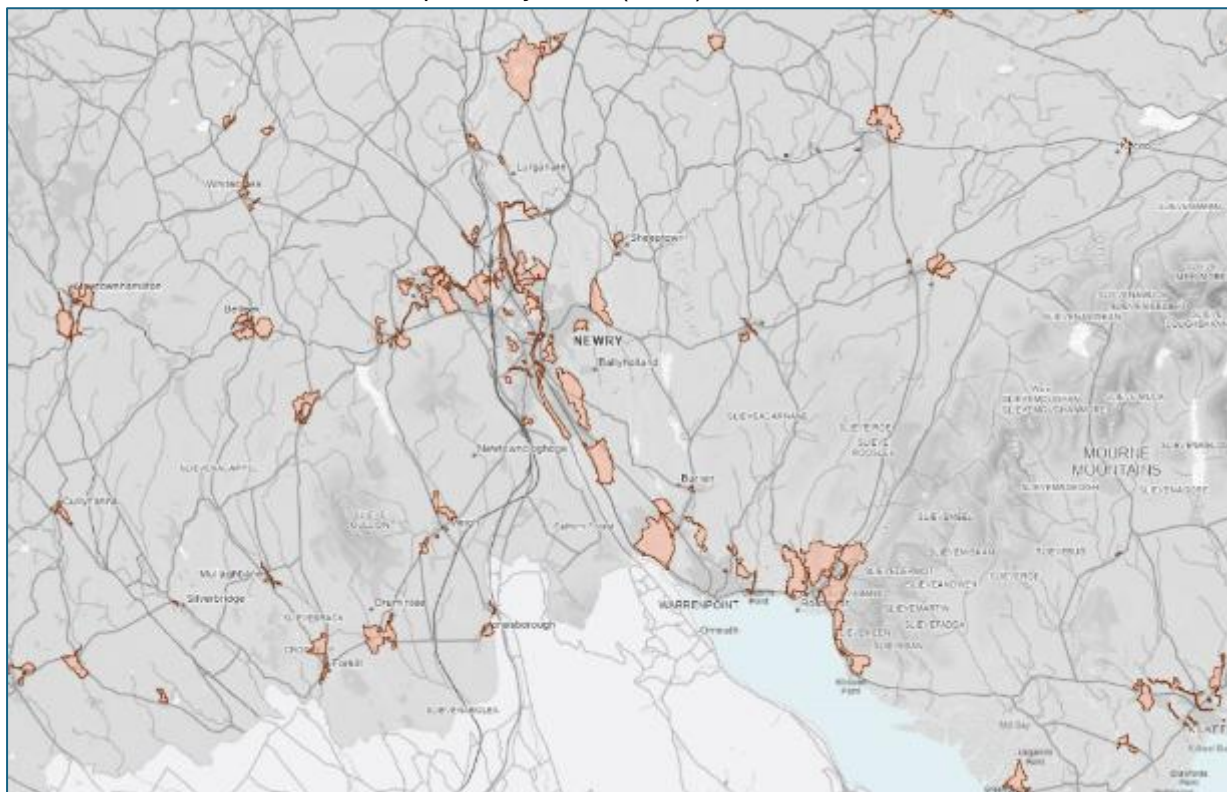
¹¹³ [Baseline Study and Gap Analysis of Coastal Erosion Risk Management NI | Department for Infrastructure](#)

¹¹⁴ [Research_Report-441.pdf](#)

The images below give an indication of the breadth and location of Landscape and Seascape Assets in Northern Ireland.

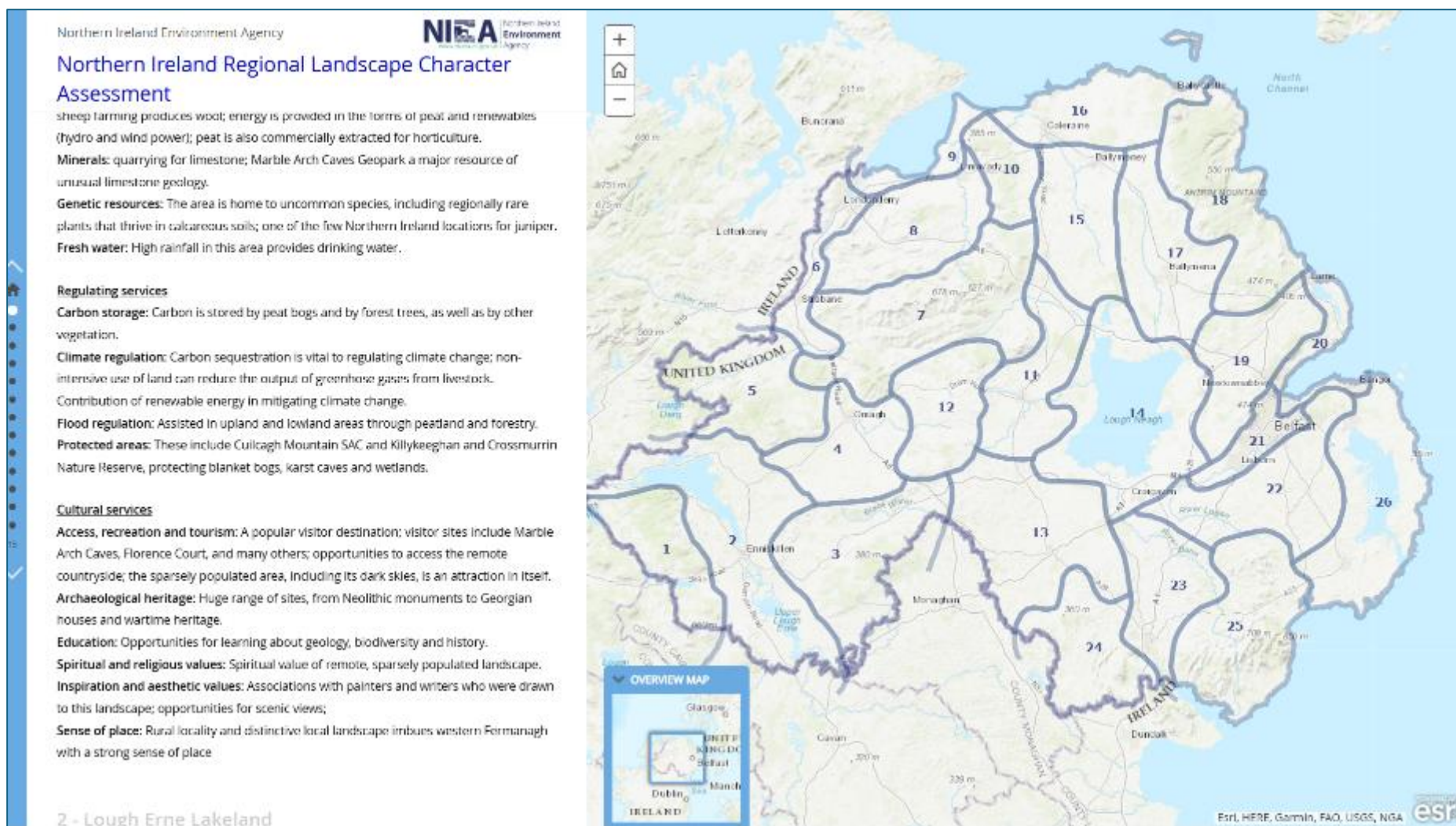
Fig 10 - Sample showing Local Landscape Policy Areas near Newry, County Down - to note the intervisibility with ROI shown to south in light grey – HERoNI HED Map Viewer¹¹⁵ (Crown Copyright)

- NI has 130 Local Landscape Policy Areas (LCAs)



¹¹⁵ [Historic Environment map viewer | Department for Communities](#)

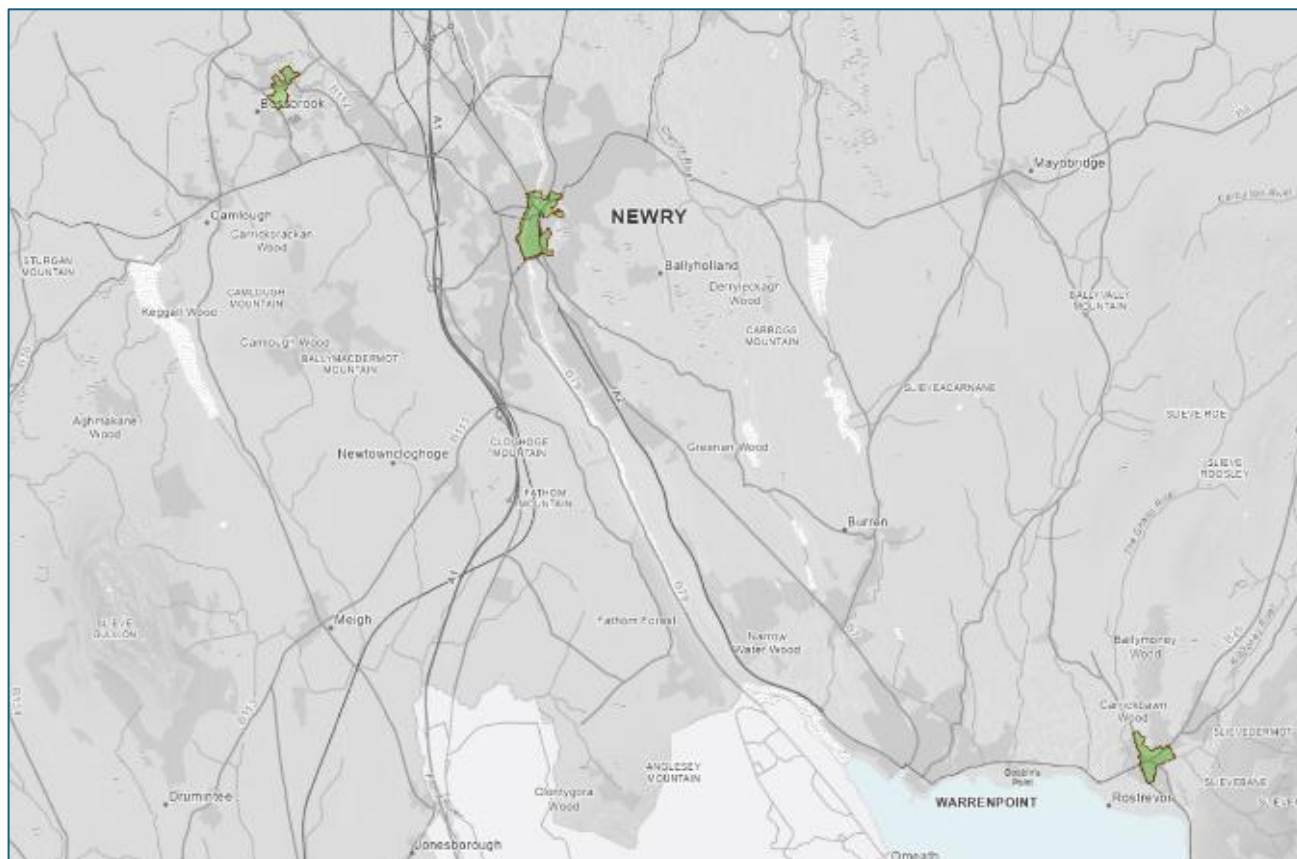
Fig 11 - Sample showing Landscape Character Assessment - (NIEA Map Viewer¹¹⁶ (Crown Copyright))



¹¹⁶ [Natural Environment Map Viewer](#) | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Fig. 12 - Sample showing Conservation Areas in Bessbrook, Newry and Rostrevor¹¹⁷ – See Department for Infrastructure and Local Councils for detailed maps¹¹⁸

- NI has 60 Conservation Areas (CAs)

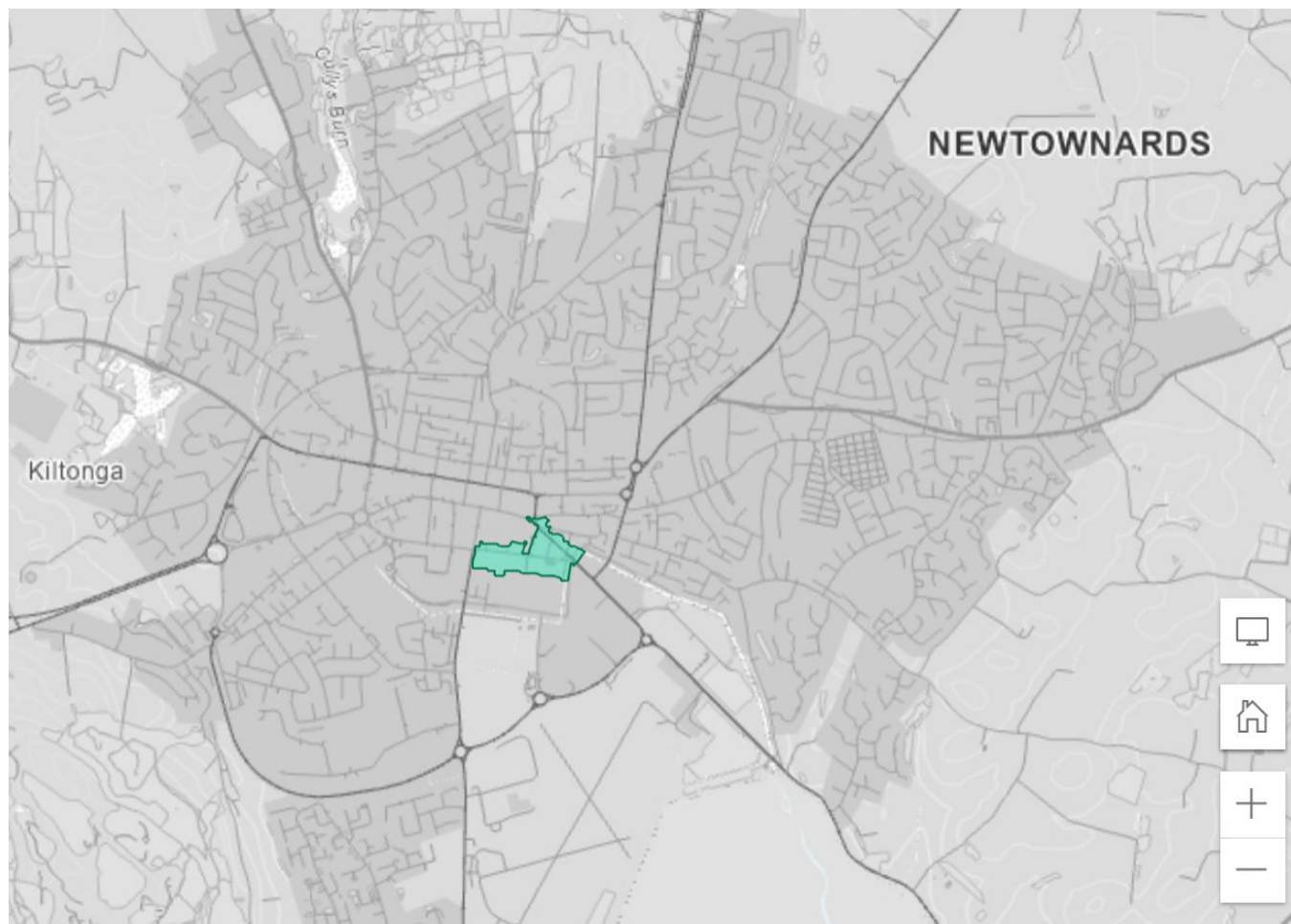


¹¹⁷ [Conservation Areas](#)

¹¹⁸ [Conservation Area Guides \(A-Z list\) | Department for Infrastructure](#)

Fig 13 - Sample area in Newtownards County Down showing Areas of Townscape Character (ATCs)¹¹⁹

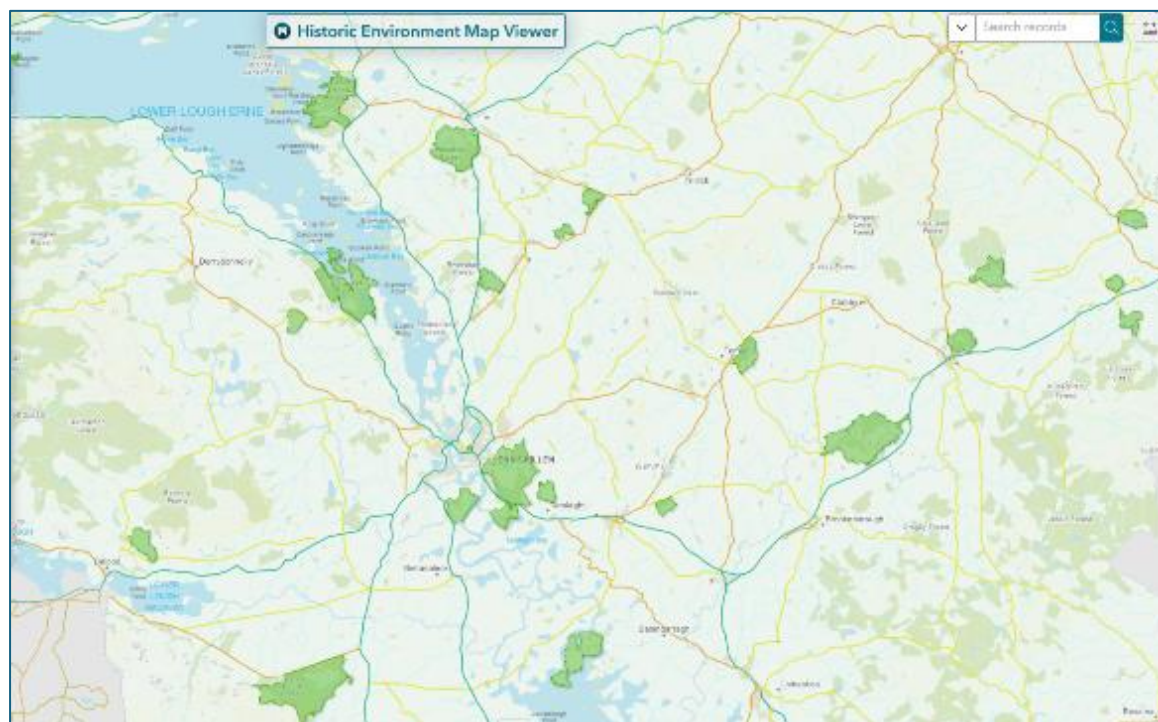
- NI has 205 Areas of Townscape Character (ATCs)



¹¹⁹ [Areas of Townscape Character - Ards and North Down Borough Council](#)

Fig 14 – Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesnes¹²⁰ – Sample Area shown in Fermanagh - HERoNI HED Map Viewer¹²¹ (Crown Copyright)

- Over 700 parks gardens and demesnes are recorded on HERoNI.
- The Register of Parks, Gardens and Demesnes of Special Historic Interest was established in the late 1990s to identify those sites that can be considered of exceptional importance within Northern Ireland. Inclusion is based upon a clear set of criteria and around 252 sites have been selected on the main Register. A comprehensive revision of the entries has been undertaken and is available to view on the Register of Parks and Gardens and Demesnes of Special Historic Interest for Northern Ireland¹²²



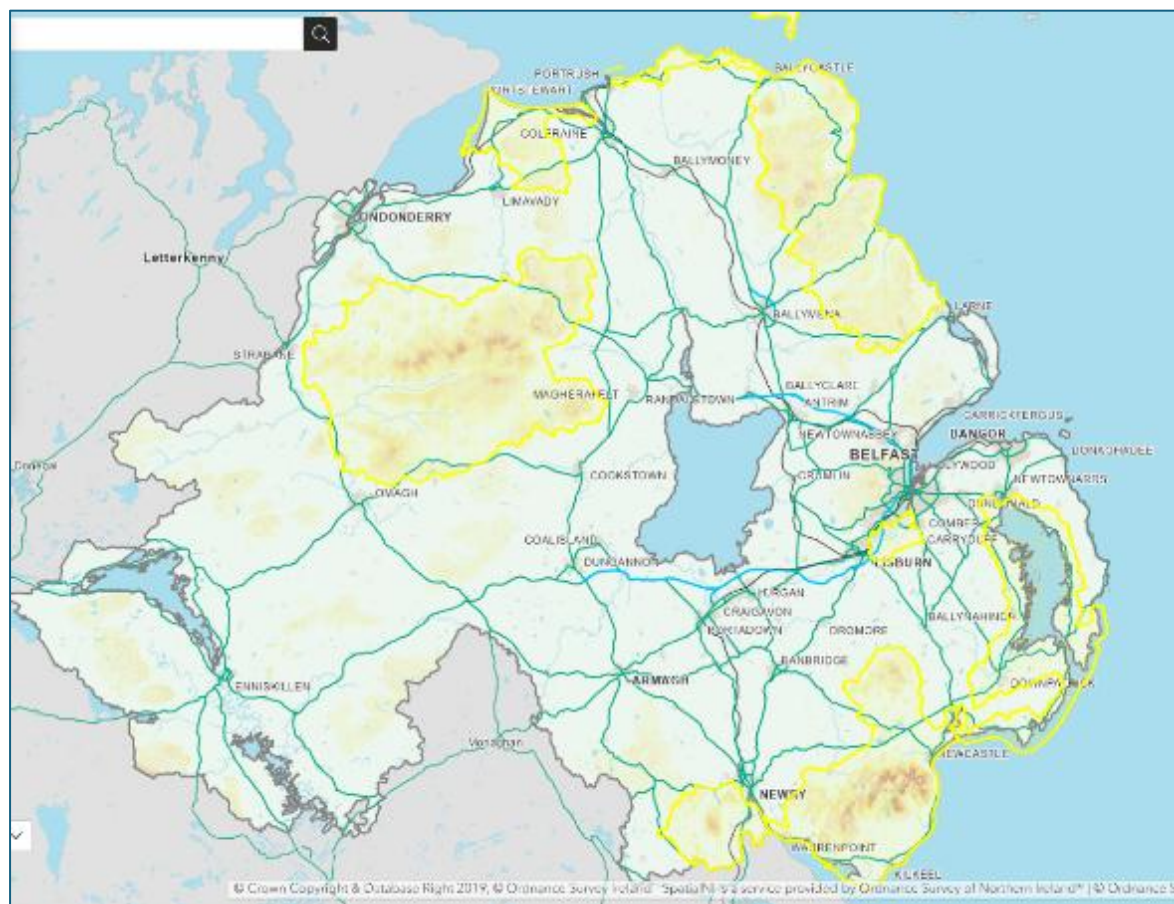
¹²⁰ [Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesnes | Department for Communities](#)

¹²¹ [Historic Environment map viewer | Department for Communities](#)

¹²² [Register of Parks and Gardens and Demesnes of Special Historic Interest for Northern Ireland](#)

Fig 15 - Areas of Natural Beauty (AONBs) – NIEA Natural Environment Map Viewer¹²³ (Crown Copyright)

- NI has 8 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs)



¹²³ [Natural Environment Map Viewer](#) | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Fig 16 - Regional Seascape Character Areas in NI (Natural Environment Map Viewer | DAERA) ¹²⁴ Crown Copyright)

- NI has 24 Regional Seascape Areas



¹²⁴ [Natural Environment Map Viewer | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

4.7.2 Landscapes and Seascapes - Environmental Problems

- The connection between Landscape and Cultural Heritage in Policy has been partially severed with HED having been moved out of the Northern Ireland Environment Agency in 2014 and transferred to a different Department in 2016.
- Place-based partnerships which stretch across administrative boundaries and recognise the synergies between sustainable development, and protection of landscape, flora and fauna, heritage and intangible heritage (such as the Lough Neagh Partnership) are not permanent and therefore can be limited in their scope despite having proven benefits – these rely on time-bound funding bids for example from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.
- Whilst there are 60 Conservation Areas in NI, no new CA designation has occurred for 20 years. Within those that exist, numbers of demolitions are not publicly reported.
- Local councils have not used their powers to create ‘Local listings’, citing a lack of heritage resource/training.
- Funding which supports private owners of heritage assets is not generally recognised as having a ‘public good’.
- The ‘Conservation Deficit’¹²⁵ means that it often does not make economic sense to invest privately in heritage buildings outside the centre of Belfast or in some conservation areas like Hillsborough, where there is a recognised ‘Heritage Premium’. This issue is particularly acute where buildings have been vacant and not maintained for a long period.
- Elsewhere, councils are reluctant to use the powers they have to enforce and use Urgent Works Notices to protect heritage assets, contributing to the quality of places.
- The contribution of the historic environment to quality places is recognised mainly in development in terms of designation – for example within conservation areas, listed buildings, scheduled monuments or historic parks and gardens. Some monuments, historic buildings, industrial heritage and defence heritage assets are not determined as being of ‘special’ interest but are worthy of recording. Therefore, though they may be a /material consideration’ in planning terms, they are not protected by legislation from demolition.
- For environmental problems concerning seascapes – see also p. 119 Section 4.13.4 ‘Air, Soil and Water – Environmental problems’

¹²⁵ ‘Conservation deficit - The amount by which the cost of repair (and conversion to optimum viable use if appropriate) of a heritage asset exceeds its market value on completion of repair and conversion, allowing for all appropriate development costs.’ [HEAG](#)

4.8 Biodiversity, Flora & Fauna

4.9 Part 1 - Biodiversity, Flora, Fauna – Relationship with other plans, strategies and programmes

SEA Topic - Biodiversity, Flora, Fauna				
Protection Relevant legislation: • The Environment (NI) Order 2002 • Planning Act (NI) 2011 • The Wildlife (NI) Order 1985 (as amended) • Wildlife and Natural Environment Act ('The WANE Act') (Northern Ireland) 2011¹²⁶ • The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended)				
International Convention, declaration or charter	Legislative basis, environmental objectives or requirements of the plan or programme	How objectives and requirements of other plans or programmes might be taken on board in Historic Environment Policy (HE Policy) or how HE Policy might impact other plans, policies or programmes	Impacts on HE Policy	HE Policy may impact outcomes
UNESCO World Heritage Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural ¹²⁷	This convention is legally binding. The UK ratified this Convention in 1972. The most significant feature of the 1972 World Heritage Convention is that it links together in a single document the concepts of nature conservation and the preservation of cultural properties. The Convention recognizes the way in which people interact with nature, and the fundamental need to	Historic Environment Policy will support and enhance the strategic objectives of this Convention in Northern Ireland, focusing on communities, awareness and protection of world heritage sites. In Northern Ireland there are currently two world heritage sites – the Giant's Causeway (a natural site) and Gracehill village (a cultural site) a part of the transnational Moravian Church Settlements World Heritage	✓	

¹²⁶ [Wildlife and Natural Environment Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2011](#)

¹²⁷ [Cultural heritage | UNESCO UIS](#)

and Natural Heritage (1972) ¹²⁸	preserve the balance between the two. The ‘five C’s’ are the strategic objectives adopted by the World Heritage committee in 2002 and 2007: • Credibility - Strengthen the Credibility of the World Heritage List, as a representative and geographically balanced testimony of cultural and natural properties of outstanding universal value; • Conservation - Ensure the effective Conservation of World Heritage properties; • Capacity-building - Promote the development of effective Capacity-building measures, including assistance for preparing the nomination of properties to the World Heritage List, for the understanding and implementation of the World Heritage Convention and related instruments; • Communication - Increase public awareness, involvement and support for World Heritage through communication; Communities. - Enhance the role of communities in the implementation of the World Heritage Convention.	Site. However, amplifying and making the most of the transboundary significance of NI heritage assets will be one of the aims of HE Policy.		
Other plan/programme or strategy	Legislative basis, environmental objectives or requirements of the plan or programme	How objectives and requirements of other plans or programmes might be taken on board in Historic Environment Policy (HE Policy) or how HE Policy might impact other plans, policies or programmes	Impacts on HE Policy	HE Policy may Impact outcomes

¹²⁸ [1972, Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage – ICOMOS CIVVIH](#)

Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS) ¹²⁹	The RDS has a statutory basis. It sets out the framework for the spatial development for the Northern Ireland Region up to 2035. The RDS is cross-cutting with linkages to other key government policies and statutory legislation.	Historic Environment Policy will align with and expand on the Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS) which lists as one of its 8 key aims to: <i>‘Protect and enhance the environment for its own sake.’</i> It sets out regional guidance to “ <i>Conserve, protect and where possible, enhance our built heritage and our natural environment</i> ”	✓	✓
Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) ¹³⁰	(SPPS) proposes that: <i>‘Sustaining and enhancing biodiversity is fundamental to furthering sustainable development. The Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy and EU Biodiversity Strategy seek to halt the loss of biodiversity and ecosystems services by 2020. Furthermore, the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 places a statutory duty on every public body to further the conservation of biodiversity. However, all of us share the collective responsibility to preserve and improve the natural environment and halt the loss of biodiversity for the benefit of future generations.’</i> Regional strategic objectives for Biodiversity, flora and fauna are to: • <i>protect, conserve, enhance and restore the abundance, quality, diversity and distinctiveness of the region’s natural heritage</i> • <i>further sustainable development by ensuring that natural heritage and associated diversity is conserved and enhanced as an integral part of social, economic and environmental development;</i>	Historic Environment Policy will align with and expands on the Strategic Planning Policy Statement HE Policy will provide high level advice on Government’s attitude to the historic environment which will influence the implementation of the SPPS (SPPS is based on protective legislation, however, it is guided by policy in practice.) HE Policy will set the framework for managing and protecting heritage assets conserving, enhancing and promoting <i>‘sustainable development and environmental stewardship’</i> of assets which may be protected, may be of heritage value (even if unprotected) or may sit within natural or cultural sites such as LLPAs (Local Landscape Policy Areas) AONBs (Areas of Natural Beauty) and Conservation Areas – this will have a beneficial effect on protected assets and sites and their wider settings – the built and natural environment. HE Policy will recommend how the historic environment can support places at varying scales to make the most of their heritage assets to benefit local communities, and their local environments. This should impact actions and strategies or local plans such as Local Development Plans, Heritage Plans and Climate Change Action Plans for local councils.’	✓	✓

¹²⁹ [Regional Development Strategy 2035 | Department for Infrastructure](#)

¹³⁰ [Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland \(SPPS\)](#)

	• <i>assist in meeting international (including European), national and local responsibilities and obligations in the protection and enhancement of the natural heritage;</i> • <i>contribute to rural renewal and urban regeneration by ensuring developments take account of the role and value of natural heritage in supporting economic diversification and contributing to a high quality environment;</i> • <i>take actions to reduce our carbon footprint and facilitate adaptation to climate change.'</i>	<i>Deliver[ing] economic and community benefit', whilst benefitting the environment.</i> HE Policy will support the re-use of buildings to reduce waste, therefore contributing to <i>'taking action to reduce our carbon footprint'</i>.		
Northern Ireland Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP)¹³¹	As noted above, the strategic objectives of the EIP include: • Excellent air, water and land quality;	HE Policy will augment the EIP: through management and appreciation of the historic environment, as well as an emphasis on re-use and support for adaptation to climate change impacts, HE Policy supports to the EIP objectives to achieve excellent air, water and land quality, which supports biodiversity.	✓	✓
Biodiversity Strategy for NI to 2020¹³²	This Strategy is now past its date of 2020, however the principles still apply: <i>'Much of our natural heritage has been heavily influenced by previous generations. We are entrusted with protecting it and handing it on safely to future generations.'</i> It describes <i>'..valuing the environment in the broadest context.'</i> and also that: <i>'Ecosystems are inter-dependent systems of living things (plants, micro-organisms and animals, including people) in their physical environment.'</i>	This emphasis on and requirement for protection and management of natural ecosystems aligns with HE Policy's objectives. This 'Ecosystem approach' applies also to the historic environment – whether urban, aquatic or rural – the interventions that have been made and might be made should be considered for their impact as a whole.	✓	✓

¹³¹ [Environmental Improvement Plan for Northern Ireland | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

¹³² <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/biodiversity-strategy-northern-ireland-2020-0>

	<i>They overlap and interact and are impacted upon by a wide variety of human and natural factors. When determining how well the environment is functioning, we need to look at systems and their complex interrelationships rather than individual organisms or species. This is termed the ecosystem approach and forms the basis of modern biodiversity protection legislation and practice. The Strategy adopts that approach as well as the corollary of ecosystem services that looks at the many goods and services ecosystems provide to people.'</i>	In many cases, passive protection has been provided for ecosystems as a result of the protection of heritage assets like monuments, parks and gardens, intertidal zones or underwater wrecks. These complimentary activities and relationships will be highlighted and supported, with the argument for the potential for further alignment made in HE Policy.		
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4.10 Part 2 – Biodiversity, Flora & Fauna - Environmental Characteristics

SEA topic	SEA Objective
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	• avoid damage to designated wildlife and geological sites and protected species • maintain biodiversity, avoiding irreversible losses • restore the full range of characteristic habitats and species to viable levels • reverse the long term decline in farmland birds • ensure the sustainable management of key wildlife sites and the ecological processes on which they depend • provide opportunities for people to come into contact with and appreciate wildlife and wild places

4.10.1 Biodiversity, Flora & Fauna - Existing Baseline

- Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs) are protected areas that represent the best of Northern Ireland's wildlife and geological sites that make a considerable contribution to the conservation of our most valuable natural places.
- By March 2025, 111,159 hectares across 394 sites were declared Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI). 246,300 hectares across 58 sites were declared Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and 114,600 hectares across 16 sites as Special Protection Areas (SPAs). 77,700 hectares across 20 sites were declared Ramsar sites (areas of wetland and waterfowl conservation), and 26,178 hectares across 5 sites as Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs).
- In Northern Ireland, over 52 per cent of forests and woodlands are managed by Forest Service¹³³.
- ‘...many Natura 2000¹³⁴ sites [now known as UK Site Network Sites] closely associated with cultural sites. For instance, of the 365 World Heritage Sites in the EU, almost 20% are located in, or directly on the border of a Natura 2000 site. A further 142 sites (or 42%) are within walking distance (2 km or less away).’¹³⁵

¹³³ <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/statistics/forestrystatistics/>

¹³⁴ [The Natura 2000 protected areas network — European Environment Agency](#)

¹³⁵ [Europe's cultural and natural heritage in natura 2000-KH0418385ENN.pdf](#)

- The wild bird population indicator using 56 bird species shows that wild bird abundance in Northern Ireland is at a similar level to that in the mid-1990s when the Breeding Bird Survey started. Bird populations peaked in 2005 and have been in general decline since, driven principally by bird species found in farmland habitats.
- There are only five species considered to be strongly associated with urban habitats, and one of these (Pied Wagtail) is found in a wide range of habitats rather than being a true urban specialist. The urban bird indicator shows an increase of 31 per cent between 1996 and 2023, driven by increases in four of the five species, especially House Martin but also House Sparrow and Collared Dove. Only Swift shows a decline, of almost 40 per cent.
- In 2024/25¹³⁶, the area of terrestrial protected sites under management in Northern Ireland was recorded as at least 25,710 hectares. A range of initiatives and delivery mechanisms, which include potential funding, have been identified to help achieve favourable condition for terrestrial sites, including:
 - In 2023 the Centre of Environmental Data and Recording (CEDaR) gained approval for 10 year funding to continue and expand as Northern Ireland's environmental records centre. Legislative species survey works are now embedded within CEDaR for the next 10 years, which will increase our understanding of numerous features of protected sites and inform appropriate management.
 - Continuation of the Environmental Farming Scheme Higher Level agreements which commenced in early 2018.
 - The Management of Sensitive Site (MoSS) programme delivers bespoke and targeted management, in partnership with landowners, to work towards favourable condition of ASSI features.
 - Continue to provide support to the two INTERREG Va Habitats projects delivering a series of conservation management plans and conservation actions for a range of cross border sites.
 - Working with local authorities to protect priority habitats and species advising on development control and new area plans.
 - Developing working examples on the most effective way of measuring natural capital to ensure that the full benefits of natural assets are realised which will ultimately inform elements of Conservation Management Plans.
 - Working with DAERA's grant-aid budget and external EU and Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) funding to manage designated sites and priority habitats and species. 2023 saw the roll out of a new Environment Fund cycle which incorporates various environmental improvement projects many of which are focused on protected sites. During 2024-25 as part of the Strategic Strand of the Environment Fund, 40 Letters of Offer were issued to applicants totalling over £10.1m and along with close to £0.3m to support 12 projects under the Water Quality Challenge Fund.
 - A Peatland Challenge Fund Competition for 2024/27 was launched in May 2024, under the EF grant programme, with financial support for this fund from the Irish Government's Shared Island Fund Initiative.

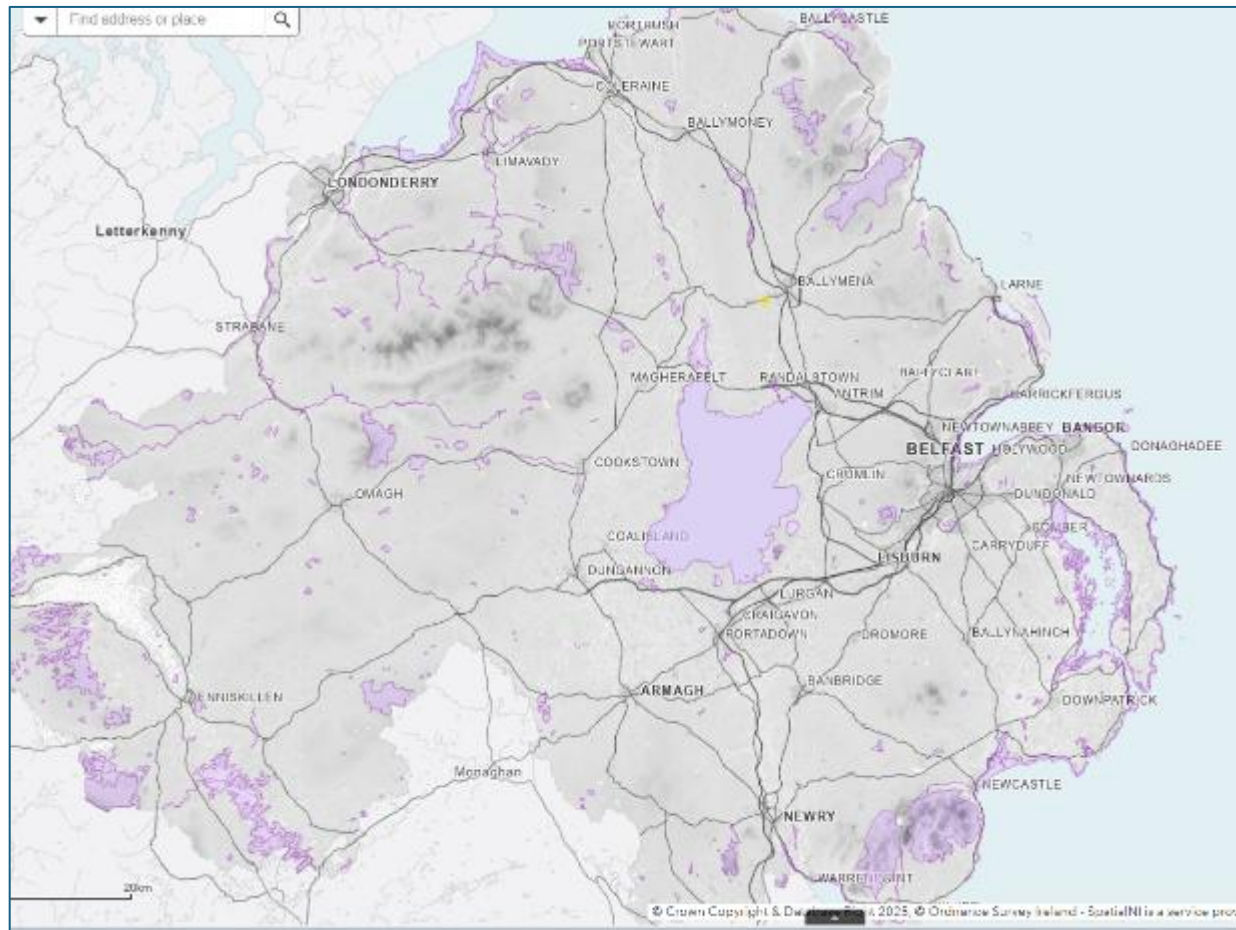
¹³⁶ [Northern Ireland Environmental Statistics Report 2025 | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

- The Independent Assessment used to help inform the third UK Climate Risk Assessment (CCRA3)¹³⁷ assesses 61 risks and opportunities from climate change to Northern Ireland, including to business, infrastructure, housing, the natural environment, our health and from the impacts of climate change internationally. **Risks to cultural heritage have been identified.** In addition the report identifies:
 - Risks to terrestrial species and habitats from changing climatic conditions and extreme events, including temperature change, water scarcity, wildfire, flooding, wind, and altered hydrology (including water scarcity, flooding and saline intrusion).
 - Risks to terrestrial species and habitats from pests, pathogens and invasive species.
 - Risks to soils from changing climatic conditions including seasonal aridity and wetness.
 - Risks to natural carbon stores and sequestration from changing climatic conditions, including temperature change and water scarcity.
 - Risks to and opportunities for agricultural and forestry productivity from extreme events and changing climatic conditions (including temperature change, water scarcity, wildfire, flooding, coastal erosion, wind and saline intrusion).
 - Risks to agriculture from pests, pathogens and invasive species.
 - Risks to forestry from pests, pathogens and invasive species.
 - Risks to freshwater species and habitats from changing climatic conditions and extreme events, including higher water temperatures, flooding, water scarcity and phenological shifts.
 - Risks to marine species, habitats and fisheries from changing climatic conditions, including ocean acidification and higher water temperatures.
 - Risks to marine species and habitats from pests, pathogens and invasive species.
 - Risks and opportunities to coastal species and habitats due to coastal flooding, erosion and climate factors.

¹³⁷ [Summary for Northern Ireland \(CCRA3-IA\) - UK Climate Risk](#)

The images below give an indication of the breadth and location of Biodiversity Assets in Northern Ireland.

Fig 17 - Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs) – NIEA Natural Environment Map Viewer¹³⁸ (Crown Copyright)



¹³⁸ [Natural Environment Map Viewer](#) | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Fig 18 - Showing ASSIs in Fermanagh (Crown Copyright)

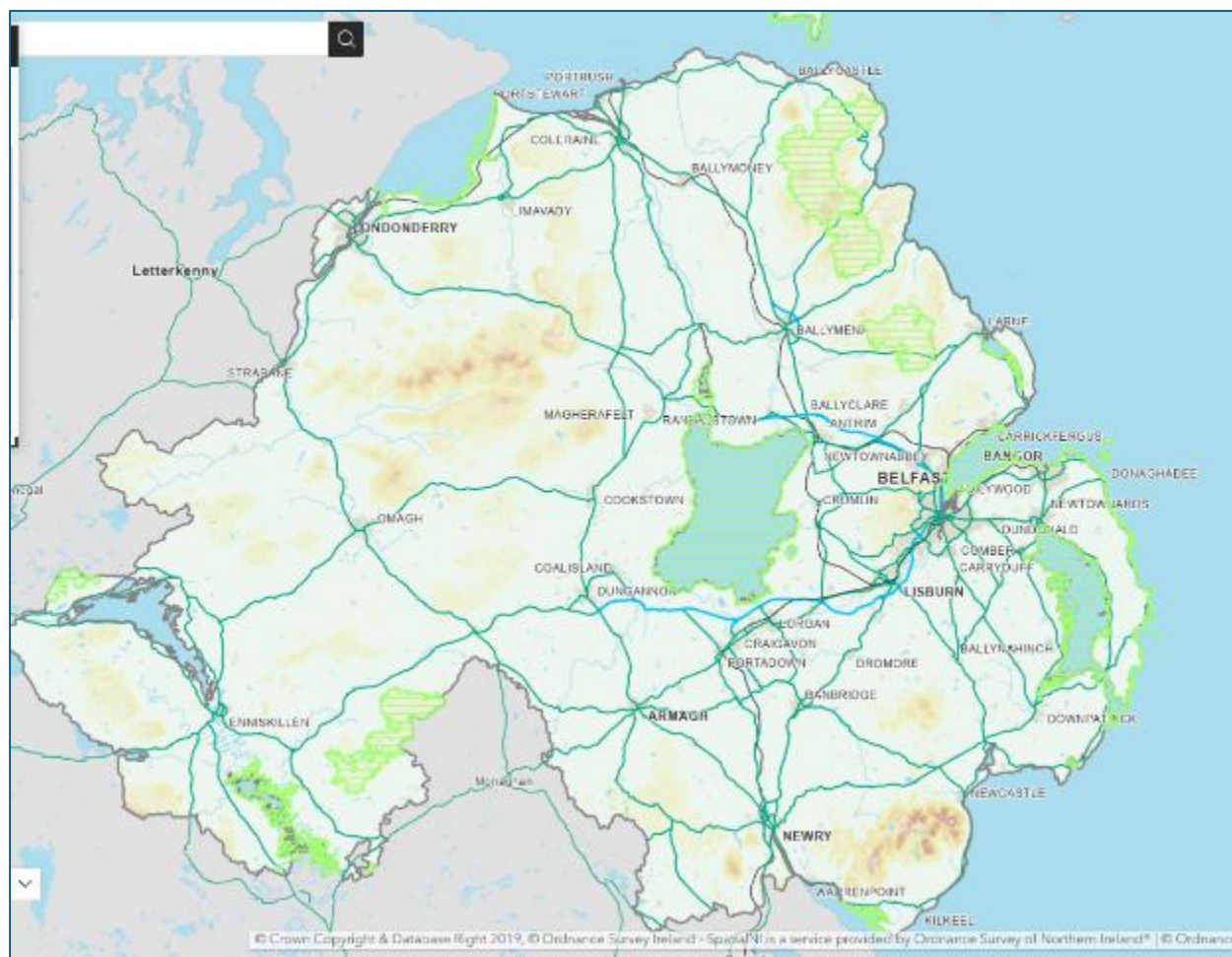


Fig 19 – National Site Network – Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) – NIEA Natural Environment Map Viewer¹³⁹ (Crown Copyright)



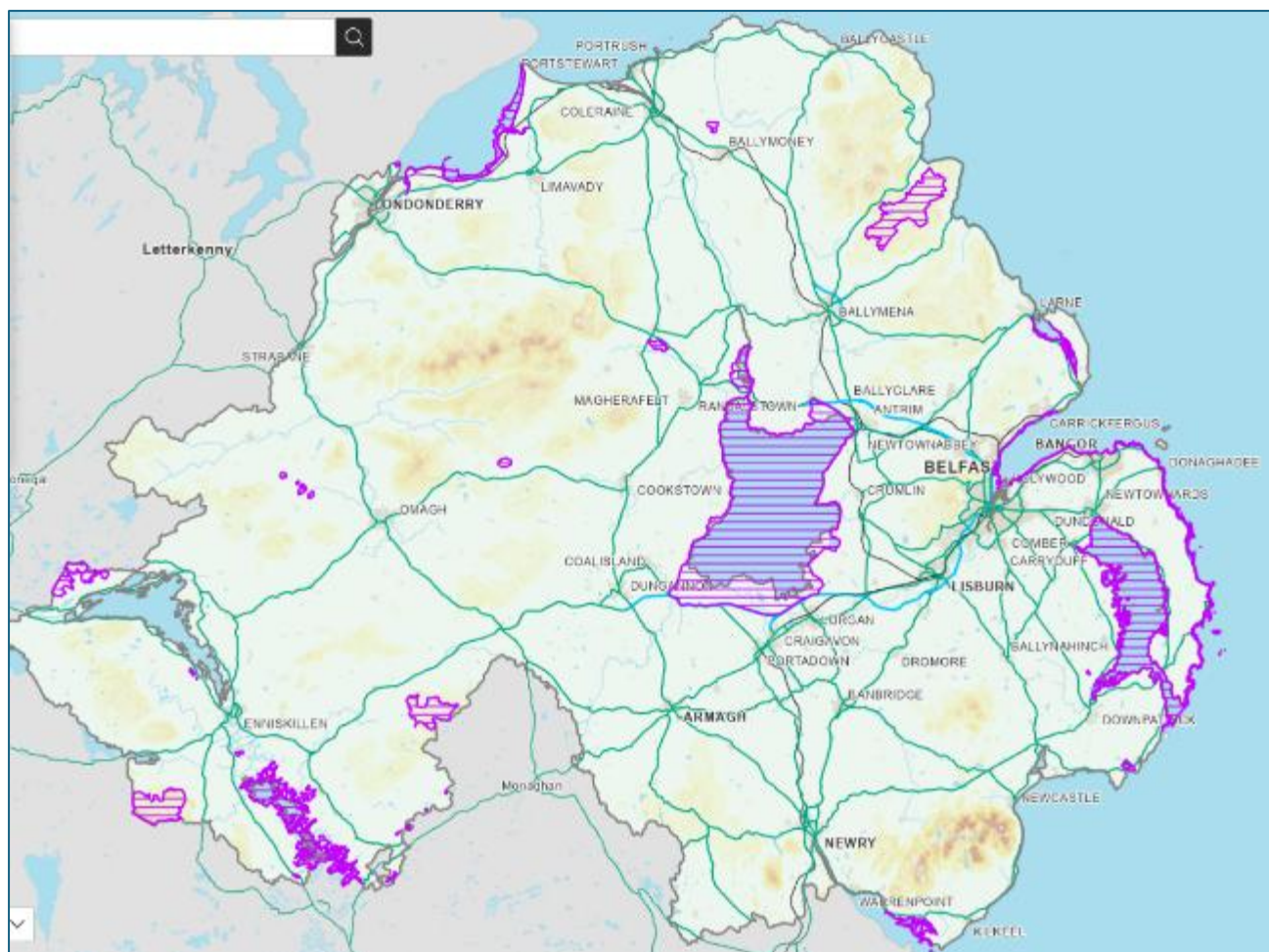
¹³⁹ [Natural Environment Map Viewer](#) | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Fig 20 – National Site Network – Special Protection Areas (SPAs) – HERoNI HED Map Viewer¹⁴⁰ (Crown Copyright)



¹⁴⁰ [Historic Environment map viewer](#) | Department for Communities

Fig 21 – National Site Network – Ramsar zones – HERoNI HED Map Viewer¹⁴¹ (Crown Copyright)



¹⁴¹ [Historic Environment map viewer](#) | Department for Communities

4.10.2 Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna - Environmental problems

The Office for Environmental protection (OEP)¹⁴² reports that: *‘ Current pressures on nature in Northern Ireland are unsustainable and urgent action is needed to protect and improve the environment for this and future generations.’... ‘Government must act urgently and decisively, not only to reverse a lifetime of environmental degradation and to restore the diversity of Northern Ireland’s habitats and species, but also to ensure a sustainable agri-food industry and wider economy.’. “Failure to do so risks a heavy toll on the prosperity and well-being of future generations.’*

‘The report finds that the two principal pressures causing biodiversity loss are land use change and pollution, closely linked to agricultural intensification. Excess nutrients, in the form of fertilisers and animal wastes from farming and from sewage, are the main forms of pollution having an impact. The report finds that agri-industry in its current form is making unsustainable demands on the environment.

Alongside agriculture and sewage management, other issues contributing to on-going biodiversity loss include waste management, resource extraction, urban development and chemical pollution.

The Office for Environmental Protection identifies three areas where action should be prioritised:

- *‘Reduce pollution by nutrients from farming and sewage. Northern Ireland has an unsustainable nutrient surplus*
- *Change land use to restore habitats. Most semi-natural habitats have been destroyed or become fragmented by land use change. A focus on restoration and nature-positive land use change is essential*
- *Reduce material and ecological footprints. The extraction, consumption and disposal of raw materials are causing widespread damage to biodiversity within Northern Ireland and beyond. ‘*

¹⁴² [OEP report on the drivers and pressures affecting nature in Northern Ireland | Office for Environmental Protection](#)

4.11 Air, Water and Soil

4.12 Part 1 - Air, Water and Soil – Relationship with other plans, policies and programmes

SEA Topic - Air, Water and Soil				
Protection Relevant legislation: • Planning Act (NI) 2011 • Planning Policy Statements (PPS – in particular PPS6, PPS16, PPS21). It should be noted that the PPS's will be superseded by Local Development Plans when they are adopted. • Protection of Military Remains Act 1986 • Protection of Wrecks Act, 1973 • Merchant Shipping Act 1995 • The Fisheries Act (Northern Ireland) 1966 • Treasure Act 1996 • UK Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 • The Marine Act (NI) 2013 • Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands Order (NI) 1985 (NCALO) • The Water Environment (Floods Directive) Regulations 2009				
International Convention, declaration or charter	• Legislative basis, environmental objectives or requirements of the plan or programme	How objectives and requirements of other plans or programmes might be taken on board in Historic Environment Policy (HE Policy) or how HE Policy might impact other plans, policies or programmes	Impacts on HE Policy	HE Policy may impact outcomes

United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)¹⁴³ and UNESCO Convention on Underwater Heritage (2001)¹⁴⁴	These conventions are legally binding once ratified. The Convention on the Law of the Sea has been ratified by the UK. Whilst the UK Government have adopted the principles set out in the annex to the Convention as best practice in the management of Underwater Cultural Heritage, ratification is under review. The objective of both is to protect underwater heritage. The UNESCO Convention establishes a common framework for the identification, preservation and sustainability of objects that have been immersed underwater for at least 100 years.	Historic Environment Policy will support the objective of these Conventions to identify, preserve and sustain underwater heritage through policy aims to conserve, protect and value heritage assets.	✓	
Other plan/programme or strategy	Legislative basis, environmental objectives or requirements of the plan or programme	How objectives and requirements of other plans or programmes might be taken on board in Historic Environment Policy (HE Policy) or how HE Policy might impact other plans, policies or programmes	Impacts on HE Policy	HE Policy may impact outcomes
Northern Ireland Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP)¹⁴⁵ UK High Level Marine Objectives 2008 and	As noted above, the strategic objectives of the EIP include: • Excellent air, water and land quality • Sustainable production and consumption on land and at sea <i>‘The UK Marine Policy Statement (MPS) is the framework for preparing Marine Plans and taking decisions affecting the marine environment.’</i>	HE Policy will augment the EIP through management and appreciation of the historic environment, which sits amongst and is integral to economic activity like tourism, agriculture and leisure activities. Historic Environment Policy aims will align with the common objectives within these three directives, supporting Marine Policy to protect underwater and inshore heritage in Northern Ireland.	✓ ✓	✓

¹⁴³ [UNCLOS+ANNEXES+RES.+AGREEMENT](#)

¹⁴⁴ [Underwater Cultural Heritage 2001 Convention | UNESCO](#)

¹⁴⁵ [Environmental Improvement Plan for Northern Ireland | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

UK Marine Policy Statement (MPS)¹⁴⁶ and the Marine Plan for Northern Ireland (once adopted)¹⁴⁷	<i>‘The Marine Plan for Northern Ireland will inform and guide the regulation, management, use and protection of our marine area. It is a single document made up of two plans, one for the inshore region and one for the offshore region.’</i> The objectives within these frameworks include ‘<i>To promote the preservation and enjoyment of marine related heritage assets</i>’.			
Towards an Integrated Coastal Zone Management Strategy for Northern Ireland 2006-2026¹⁴⁸ (DAERA)	<i>‘This strategy is intended to set out long-term objectives for achieving sustainable coastal management, through improvements to existing management systems, the development of new management systems and identifying and dealing with potential areas of conflict. ‘</i>	HE Policy will support the integrated approach of the strategy which points to cooperation between protection of terrestrial and marine heritage assets and biodiversity potential – underpinned by research and knowledge.	✓	✓
DAERA Policies to manage landscapes - natural, marine and rural environments	The legislative basis for the Department of Agriculture, the Environment and Rural Affairs’ actions is the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands Order (NI) 1985 (NCALO). Through this, DAERA designates the finest landscape areas as either Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) or National Parks land and takes steps to manage them for both conservation and recreation. The purpose of designation is to make sure that policies are created and action carried out about:	Historic Environment Policy will provide high level advice on Government’s attitude to the historic environment which will impact policy, plans and strategies created and actioned by DAERA to conserve ‘historic objects’ and historic landscapes which fall within the remit of DAERA’s policies. The remit for these actions will include the conservation of heritage assets which fall within designated habitats, and undesignated landscapes, seascapes, rural/agricultural landscapes and small settlements.	✓	✓

¹⁴⁶ [UK marine policy statement - GOV.UK](#)

¹⁴⁷ [Marine Plan for Northern Ireland | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

¹⁴⁸ [Towards an Integrated Coastal Zone Management Strategy for Northern Ireland 2006 - 2026 | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

	- conserving or enhancing the natural beauty or amenities of that area - conserving wildlife, <u>historic objects</u> or natural phenomena within it - promoting its enjoyment by the public providing or maintaining public access to it DAERA also manages 'Cross-Compliance'.¹⁴⁹ The term Cross-Compliance refers to the requirement for farmers to comply with a set of Statutory Management Requirements (SMRs) and keep their land in Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC).	DAERA's policies to protect, conserve and use natural and man-made landscapes correlate with what will be HE Policy objectives. In March 2022, DAERA announced the publication of the Future Agricultural Policy. All land managers with three or more hectares of eligible agricultural land who meet the scheme requirements will be able to participate; participants will be required to comply with the new Farm Sustainability Standards and participate in the Soil Nutrient Health Scheme package will have an outcome based approach and will focus on creating and restoring habitats that are important for species diversity. Protected zones around monuments for example already make a strong contribution to this objective, but are not currently viewed in this light. HE Policy can support and suggest partnering with DAERA to support cross-compliance opportunities to protect and enhance heritage assets in farmland, forests, and woodlands.		
Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy 2022-2040 ¹⁵⁰	there is now an increasing focus on peatland conservation and restoration and an appreciation of the ecosystem services that they provide. Peatlands are categorised as having 'Ecosystem Services' These include: <i>'Peatlands Ecosystem Services:</i> <i>Climate regulation and adaptation (carbon capture and storage)</i> <i>Unique biodiversity & habitat for wildlife</i>	Risks to heritage assets due to maladaptation include Peatland restoration works which carry the risk of inadvertent harm to both designated and undesignated heritage assets, including those not yet identified. Evidence from individual case studies highlights failure to consider heritage assets in peatland restoration can result in damage to archaeological remains. This risk has also been acknowledged through anecdotal reporting by agencies	✓	✓

¹⁴⁹ [Cross-Compliance | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

¹⁵⁰ [NI Peatland Strategy - Copy for EQIA Consultation. 8-8-2022. PDF 0.PDF](#)

	• <i>Drinking water filtration</i> • <i>Flood attenuation and water storage</i> • <i><u>An historical archive</u></i> • <i>Areas for recreation and understanding of our cultural heritage</i> • <i>Food production'</i>	including Historic England, Historic Scotland, and Bord na Móna. Heritage can also help us build resilience, understand how people and places have responded to climatic events through history and tell the story of climate change, for example through the study of peatlands. HE Policy will highlight the need to manage peatlands in a way which creates economic benefits whilst understanding and protecting them as a resource to learn about the past.		
UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) ¹⁵¹	The UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) is the technical standard for sustainable forest management across the UK, and applies to all woodland, regardless of who owns or manages it. The UKFS covers important elements of sustainable forest management, including: • biodiversity • climate change • historic environment • landscape • people • soil • water Forest Research's provides technical and practice guides and notes¹⁵², including guidance on practical management of the historic environment in the context of woodlands, understanding the social and cultural values of trees outside of woodlands in peri-urban and	A project¹⁵³ that reviewed the existing and potential role of cultural values in forest planning was undertaken in 2009/10 and included field work and interviews conducted over a 6-month period. A typology was created to differentiate between what the visitor brings to the woodland, what can be enhanced through contact with the site or site management and the benefits that can accrue from this interaction. Archaeological remains and historic features were identified as being intrinsic to sites, and therefore had the potential to be enhanced and conserved through site management. It is this interrelationship of protection and benefit that HE Policy will support.	✓	✓

¹⁵¹ [The UK Forestry Standard - GOV.UK](#)

¹⁵² [The UK Forestry Standard - Forest Research](#)

¹⁵³ [Culture and heritage - Forest Research](#)

	rural settings and guidance on managing forests which grow over peatlands.			
Clean Air Strategy for Northern Ireland ¹⁵⁴	<i>'In Northern Ireland, we face similar issues with air pollution to the rest of the UK and Europe - most notably, levels of nitrogen dioxide found in urban centres, arising principally from road traffic, in particular, diesel engines. In addition to this, we have problems with emissions from household heating and from agriculture. This document represents a comprehensive review of air quality policy and legislation in Northern Ireland and invites views on possible solutions to take forward. Some of these solutions may be related to decarbonisation of the energy sector.'</i>	Clean air can be related to access – how people – both local and visitors - get to and from heritage places. There are also considerations when disturbing for example below ground archaeology. HE Policy will emphasise the inter-relationship of one activity with another in terms of the environment – emphasising the need for best practice as an overarching sustainable development goal.	✓	✓

¹⁵⁴ <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/daera/20.21.066%20Draft%20Clean%20Air%20Strategy%20for%20NI%20-%20Public%20Discussion%20Doc%20Final%20V6.PDF>

4.13 Part 2 – Air, Water and Soil - Environmental Characteristics

SEA topic	SEA Objective
Air, Water and soil	• limit water pollution to levels that do not damage natural systems • maintain water abstraction, run-off and recharge within carrying capacity (including future capacity) • reduce contamination, and safeguard soil quality and quantity • minimize waste, then re-use or recover it through recycling, composting or energy recovery • maintain and restore key ecological processes (e.g. hydrology, water quality, coastal processes) • limit air pollution to levels that do not damage natural systems

4.13.1 Air - Existing Baseline

- In 2022, Northern Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions were estimated to be 21.3 MtCO₂e, a reduction of 26 per cent since 1990 baseline levels.
- A comprehensive summary of air pollution in Northern Ireland is available from DAERA. Annual mean concentration of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), 2011 – 2024. From 2021 to 2024, emission levels have remained at a similar concentration. This indicator is used as a wellbeing framework indicator in the latest Programme for Government (PfG) 2024-2027.

4.13.2 Water - Existing Baseline

- The marine life in the seas surrounding Northern Ireland is rich and varied and includes marine mammals such as harbour seals, whales, dolphins, seabirds, waterfowl and other species that migrate here. The majority of Northern Ireland's 650 km of coastline is protected for its special interest and several of our coastal species and habitats are recognised as internationally important.
- Northern Ireland has already exceeded the aim to designate 30 per cent of its marine area for protection by 2030 (known as "30x30"), with 38 per cent of our waters falling within the existing Marine Protected Area (MPA) network.

- Of the twenty-five inshore coastal waterbodies delineated in Northern Ireland, 13 (52%) have been assessed at good or better ecological condition.
- Four out of nine designated shellfish water protected areas (SWPAs) complied with the Water Framework Directive Guideline E. Coli standard in Shellfish Flesh in 2024.
- DAERA has been working on a range of initiatives with stakeholders to further develop effective management for MPAs including:
 - In December 2024 DAERA published its Report on the Northern Ireland Inshore MPA Network 2019 – 2024, detailing the current MPA network status, management approaches, and future recommendations.
 - In a process beginning in 2022, Northern Ireland’s first Blue Carbon Action Plan was co-designed with stakeholders alongside a review of the MPA Strategy. Developed with stakeholders, these policies aim to protect, restore and where possible create habitats that are natural carbon stores, and to improve the condition of protected features.
 - The Seabird Conservation Strategy and the Elasmobranch Conservation Strategy were consulted on in Winter 2024. Alongside the Blue Carbon Action Plan 2025-2030 and the MPA Strategy they form part of a suite of policies delivering for marine nature recovery.
 - The Environmental Improvement Plan for Northern Ireland was published in September 2024, and provides the overarching context for the action plans and strategies detailed above. It’s intended that all work will be in full alignment with the Marine Plan for Northern Ireland, once adopted.
- In 2024/25, 5 % of features within Marine and Terrestrial protected sites were in Favourable condition while 38% were in Unfavourable condition.
- Waterways Ireland manage almost 1,100 km of navigation channels across ROI and NI including 350 km of man-made canals that are over 200 years old. They use 176 locks to enable navigation throughout the waterways and manage 348 fixed, swing and lifting bridges, 157 locks and 56 weirs around Ireland in a connected network, much of which is scheduled or listed in NI.
- The location of known Marine Heritage assets is available on a spatial dataset (HED Map Viewer)
- There were 23 Marine licensing applications in 2023-24.
- The Independent Assessment used to help inform the third UK Climate Change Risk Assessment¹⁵⁵ (CCRA3) assesses 61 risks and opportunities from climate change to Northern Ireland, including to business, infrastructure, housing, the natural environment, our health and from the impacts of climate change internationally.
- Potential sources of data for the Northern Ireland marine area include:
 - Marine Mapviewer¹⁵⁶ - Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

¹⁵⁵ [third UK Climate Change Risk Assessment](#)

¹⁵⁶ [Marine Mapviewer | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

- Northern Ireland Environmental Statistics Report 2025¹⁵⁷ - Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
- Marine Strategy¹⁵⁸ - Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
- NI Coastal Vulnerability Assessment Physical Assets¹⁵⁹ - Datasets - Open Data NI
- Baseline Study and Gap Analysis of Coastal Erosion Risk Management NI¹⁶⁰ - Department for Infrastructure

4.13.3 Soil - Existing Baseline

- Northern Ireland has a wealth of geological features including the World Heritage site at the Giant's Causeway. This site has historic and cultural value connected to its geology, folklore and local traditions. The Natural Stone Database¹⁶¹ in NI describes the connection between local stone types and building stone across NI.
- In 2024/25, 502 hectares of new woodland was planted, including 75 hectares planted on land recently acquired by Forest Service and 427 hectares of new woodland supported with Forestry Grant Schemes.
- Agri-environment schemes encourage farmers and landowners to manage their land to benefit the environment. This is a growing trend - for example, organically grown flax, which is used as a roofing material in thatched roofs, is making a 'comeback'.¹⁶²
- At the end of 2024, 59,000 hectares of land in Northern Ireland were under agri-environment scheme (EFS) agreement. The EFS has been designed to address specific environmental needs, primarily related to biodiversity, climate change and water quality. It is targeted and prioritised to deliver maximum environmental benefit and value for money. The EFS has three levels:
 - A Higher Level, primarily for environmentally designated sites - Special Area of Conservation [SAC], Special Protection Area [SPA], RAMSAR, biological Areas of Special Scientific Interest [ASSI] and for priority habitats and species;
 - A Wider Level to deliver benefits across the countryside, outside of environmentally designated areas; and
 - A Group Level to facilitate co-operative action by Wider or Higher level farmers in specific areas such as environmentally designated areas, priority habitats, or river catchments.

¹⁵⁷ [Northern Ireland Environmental Statistics Report 2025 | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

¹⁵⁸ [Marine Strategy | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

¹⁵⁹ [NI Coastal Vulnerability Assessment Physical Assets - Dataset - Open Data NI](#)

¹⁶⁰ [Baseline Study and Gap Analysis of Coastal Erosion Risk Management NI | Department for Infrastructure](#)

¹⁶¹ [Stone Database NI](#)

¹⁶² [Flax: The historic plant making a comeback - Sustainable NI](#)

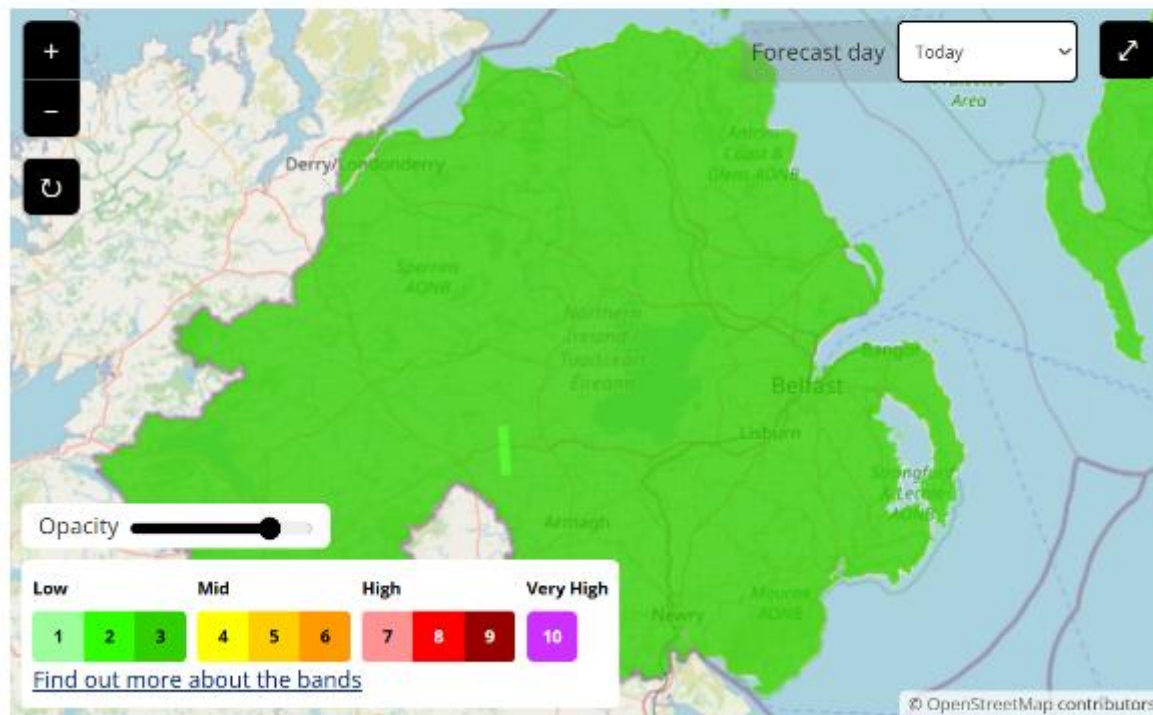
The images below give an indication of the breadth and location of Air, Soil and Water Assets in Northern Ireland.

Fig 22 - Air quality monitoring map – Northern Ireland Air¹⁶³

Air pollution forecast map

Current measured levels are shown in the table below - showing concentrations and, where applicable, the corresponding index and bands.

» [Switch to the 24 hour summary](#)



¹⁶³ [Air pollution forecast map - Northern Ireland Air](#)

Fig 23 - Extract form Natural Stone Database NI

Natural Stone

In Northern Ireland the full range of rock types (igneous, sedimentary and metamorphic) have been used as building stone since Neolithic times. As transport systems developed in the 19th and 20th centuries, stone was moved further around the country as well as being shipped in from further a field for construction of the more prestigious buildings such as town halls, churches and banks. Belfast's built heritage has a full range of Scottish Carboniferous sandstones and English Jurassic limestones used from the mid-19th Century.

The Geology Map and Key (supplied by Geological Survey of Northern Ireland) provide a simplified geology of Northern Ireland and the Table summarised the main rock types used as building stone in Northern Ireland that is referred to in the website.

 Permian to Cretaceous	 Palaeogene Lough Neagh Group, Antrim Lava Group
 Carboniferous	 Ordovician - Silurian Southern Uplands, Down, Longford Terrane
 Devonian	 Proterozoic Central Highland (Grampian) Terrane
 Late Palaeozoic Newry Igneous Complex	 Palaeogene intrusive centres
 Ordovician - Silurian Midland Valley Terrane	



Fig 24 - Showing extent of Peatlands in the Sperrins (Crown Copyright)

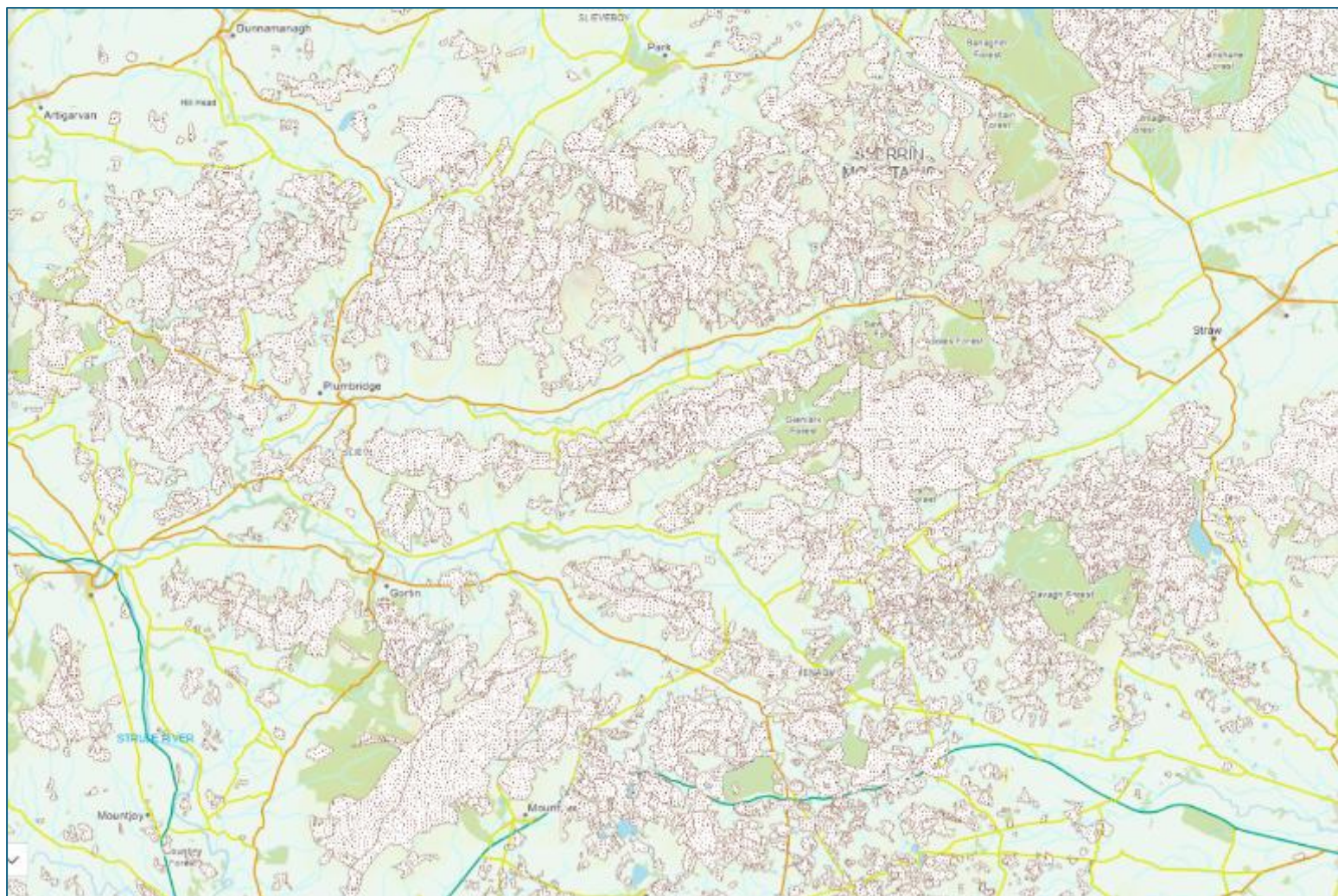


Fig 25 - Areas of Significant Archaeological Interest – HERoNI HED Map Viewer (Crown Copyright)

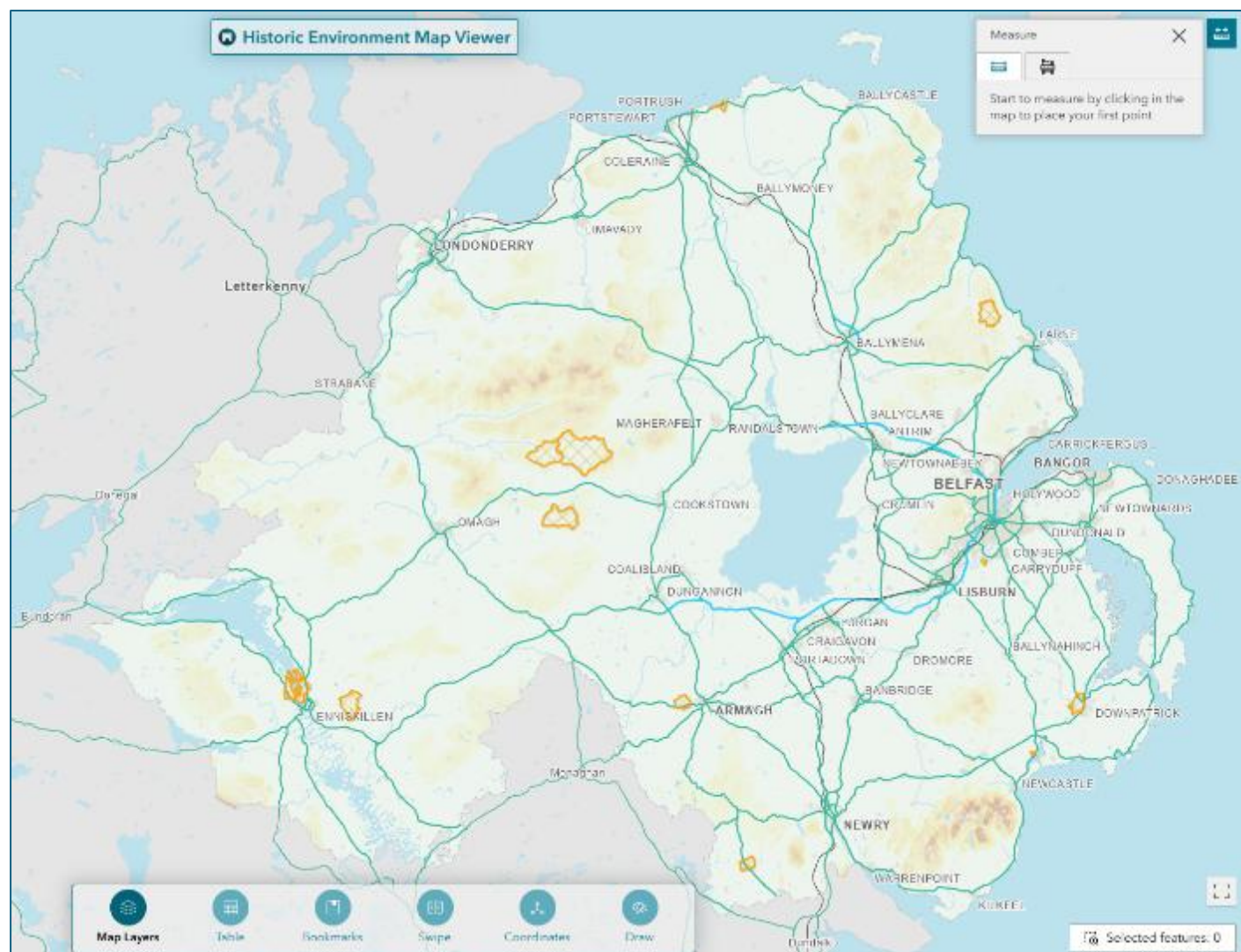
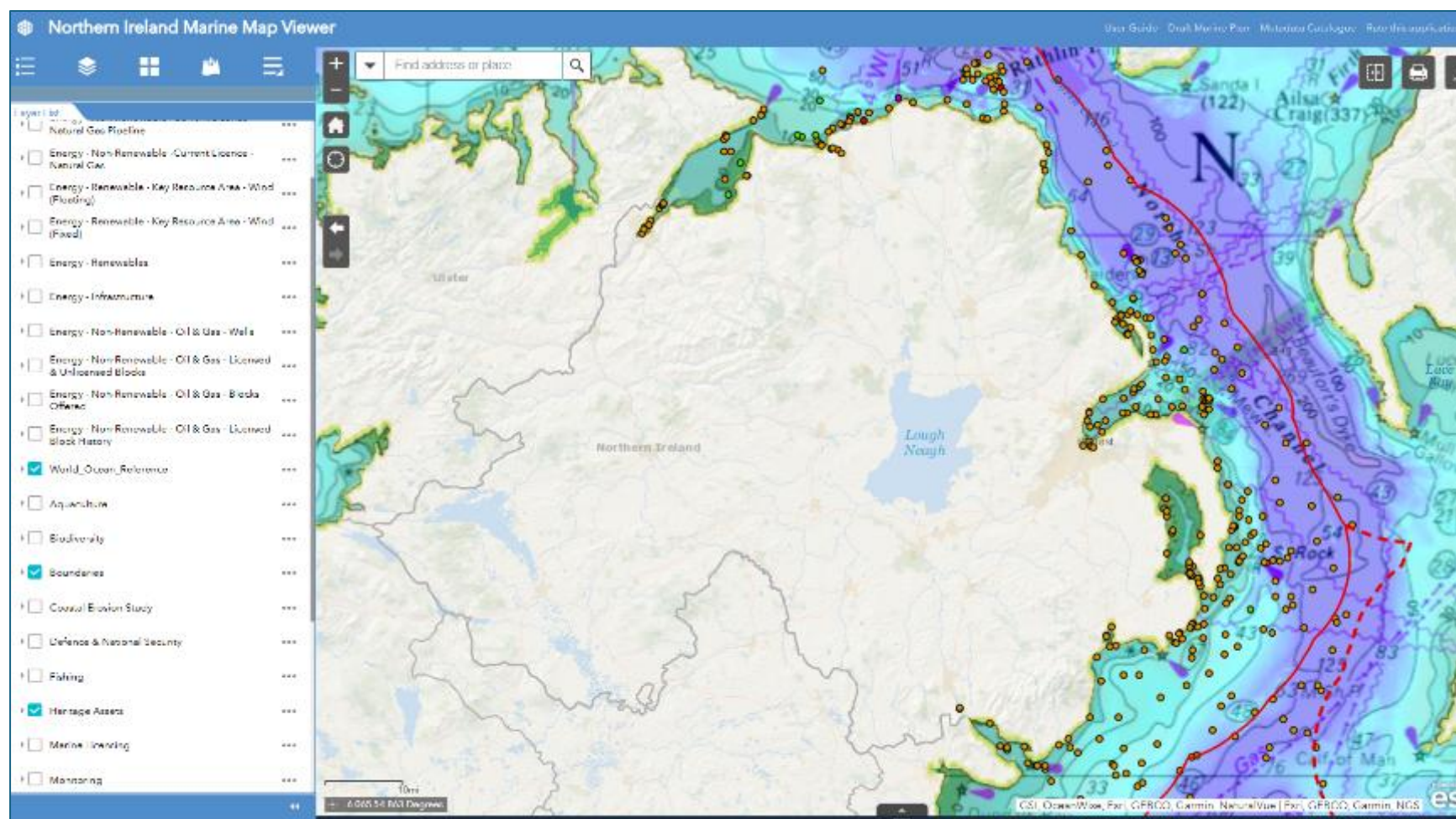
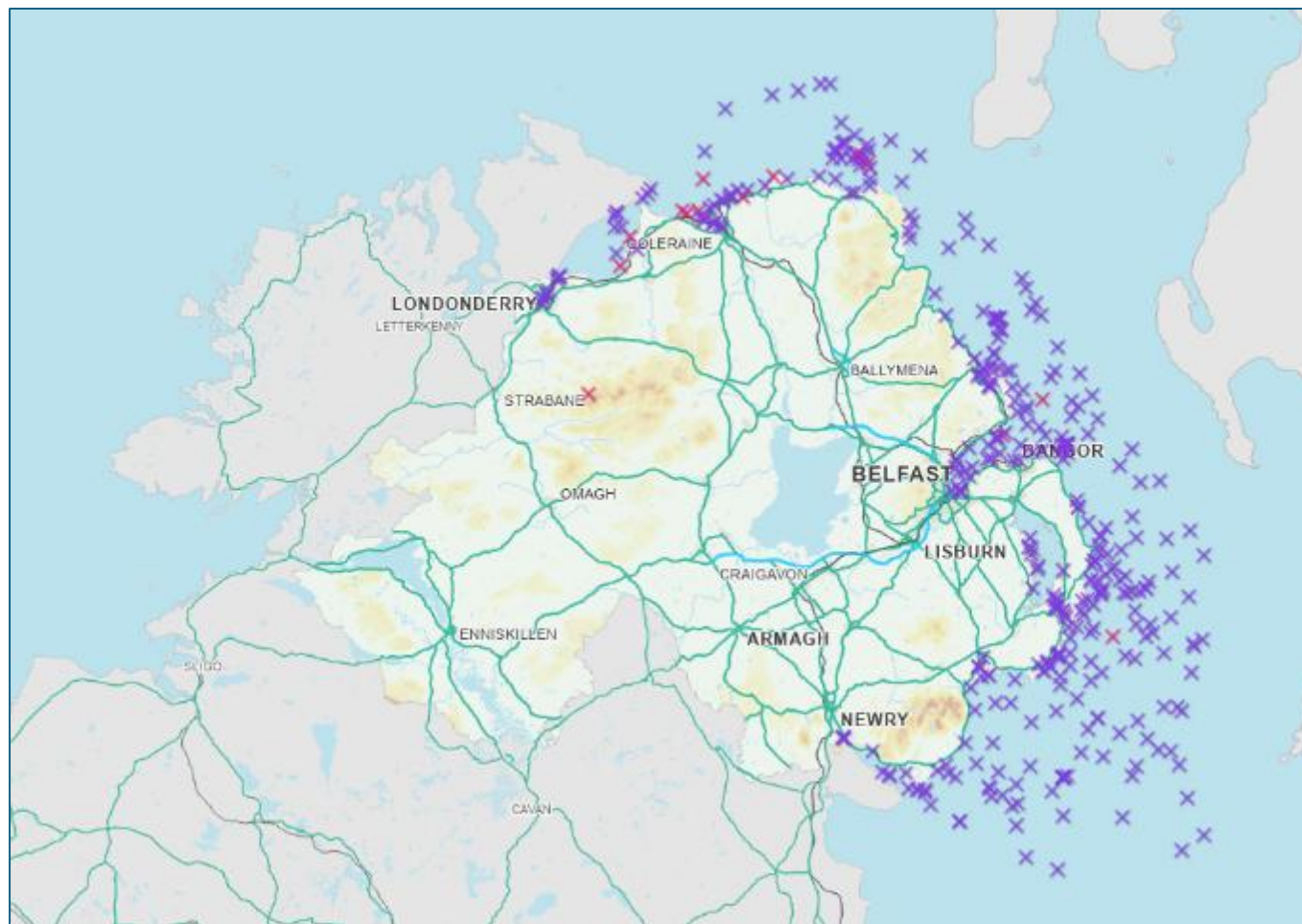


Fig 26 - Map showing heritage assets in the marine landscape (NIEA NI Marine Map Viewer ¹⁶⁴ – Copyright)



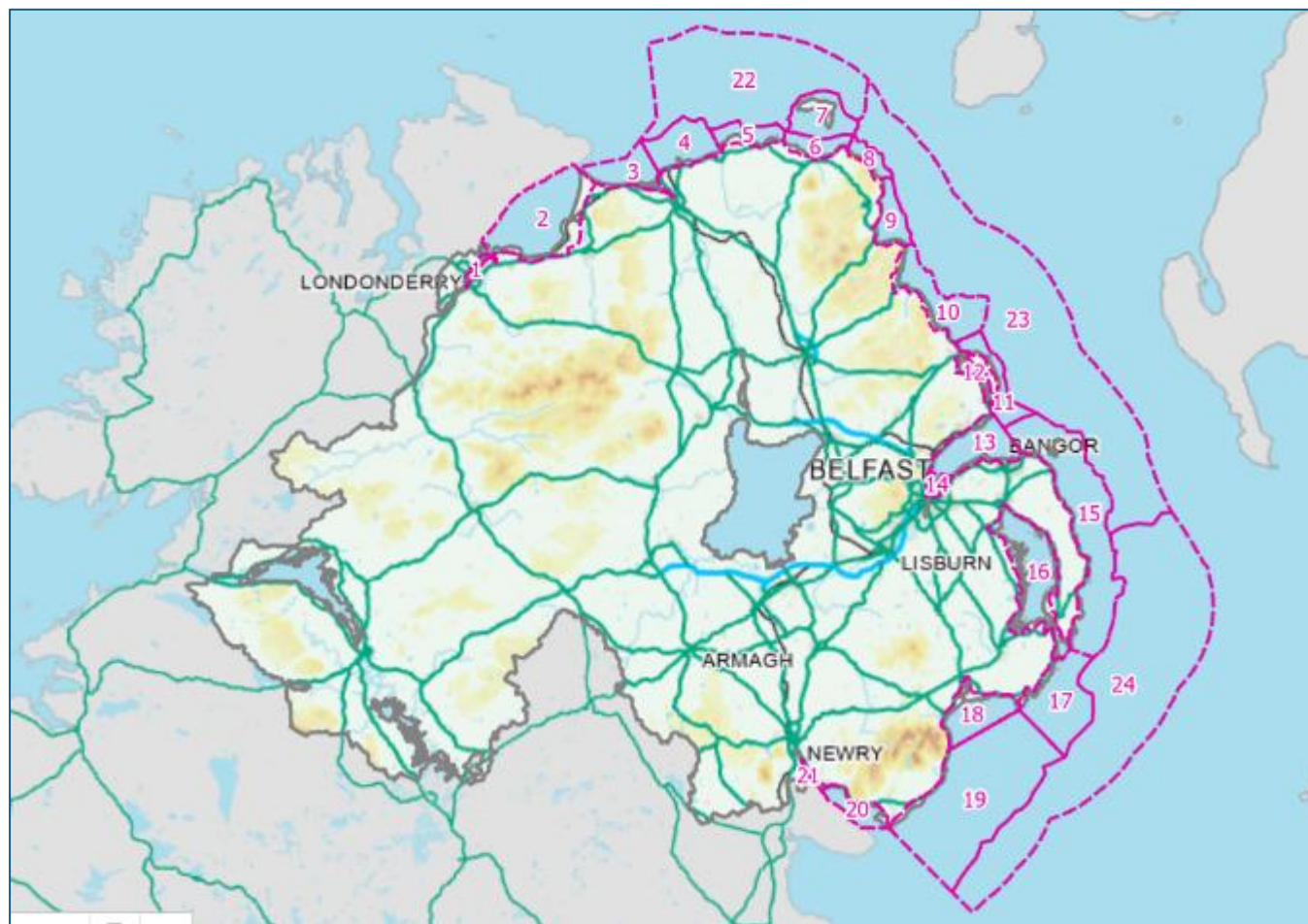
164 [Natural Environment Map Viewer](#) | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Fig 27 – Ship and Aircraft Wrecks – HERoNI HED Map Viewer¹⁶⁵ (Crown Copyright)



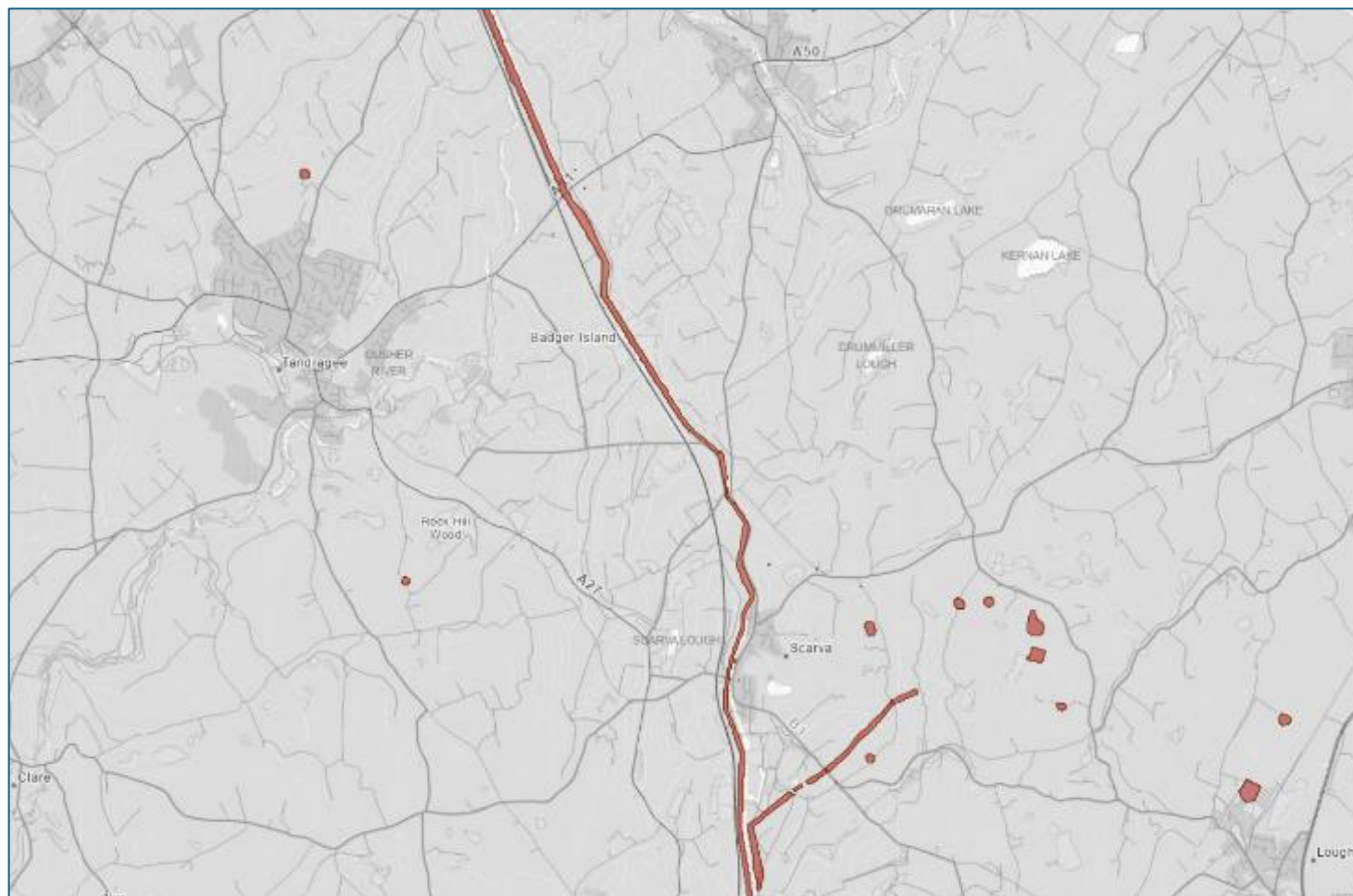
¹⁶⁵ [Historic Environment map viewer](#) | Department for Communities

Fig 28 - Map showing areas of seascape character - (NIEA NI Natural Environment Map Viewer ¹⁶⁶– Copyright)



¹⁶⁶ [Natural Environment Map Viewer](#) | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Fig 29 - Example of Scheduled Ulster Canal Network– HERoNI HED Map Viewer¹⁶⁷ (Crown Copyright)



¹⁶⁷ [Historic Environment map viewer | Department for Communities](#)

4.13.4 Air, Water and Soil - Environmental problems

Air

In Northern Ireland, air pollution occurs as a result of road transport, household burning of solid fuel, agriculture and industry. Higher levels of pollution have a negative impact on human health.

Water

In Northern Ireland, water related environmental problems mainly come from agriculture, industry and climate pressures – ie flooding, algae and sea level rises. There is evidence of habitat loss and biodiversity decline – for example pollution and land drainage has degraded freshwater habitats such as in Lough Neagh, threatening animals and plants

Soil

In Northern Ireland, soil related environmental problems include:

- soil erosion (due to overgrazing/peat being drained)
- nutrient enrichment (fertilisers) building up in soils and leaching into rivers and lakes
- loss of peatlands / carbon storage (NI's peatlands are globally important)
- contamination due to agricultural practices
- loss of habitat / bio-diversity due to conversion into farmland or agricultural practices
- climate change pressures causing erosion, flooding and leaching of nutrients, fires

4.14 Part 3 – Natural Places – HE Policy Impact

SEA topic	SEA Objective
Landscape	• protect and enhance the landscape everywhere and particularly in designated areas • value and protect diversity and local distinctiveness • improve the quantity and quality of publicly accessible open space
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	• avoid damage to designated wildlife and geological sites and protected species • maintain biodiversity, avoiding irreversible losses • restore the full range of characteristic habitats and species to viable levels • reverse the long term decline in farmland birds • ensure the sustainable management of key wildlife sites and the ecological processes on which they depend • provide opportunities for people to come into contact with and appreciate wildlife and wild places
Air, Water and soil	• limit water pollution to levels that do not damage natural systems • maintain water abstraction, run-off and recharge within carrying capacity (including future capacity) • reduce contamination, and safeguard soil quality and quantity • minimize waste, then re-use or recover it through recycling, composting or energy recovery • maintain and restore key ecological processes (e.g. hydrology, water quality, coastal processes) • limit air pollution to levels that do not damage natural systems

4.14.1 Potential impact of HE Policy on Natural Places

Landscapes and Seascapes

- Implementation of HE Policy is unlikely to have significant negative effects on Northern Ireland's landscapes and seascapes.
- The protection of heritage assets contributes to **landscape character, local distinctiveness and scenic value**; there is potential for positive impacts on the baseline condition of Northern Ireland's landscape character and scenic value when considered alongside the protection of the historic environment
- The historic environment is **central to the ecological and cultural diversity of landscapes**; like geology, (often visible in local building stone and stone walls) it creates a sense of **place and local identity**; understanding and incorporating it into policy reinforces the special character of landscapes - these links between cultural and natural landscapes are recognised for example through Landscape Character Assessments, Seascape Character Assessment Areas and Landscape Partnerships
- The significance of a heritage asset can be impacted by **changing or enhancing the environment** or local conditions, for example field and settlement patterns, or by changing **setting, legibility or visibility of heritage assets in a landscape** – for example planting schemes for forestry and upstanding archaeology - the two can work together
- Vernacular and industrial heritage are at particular risk in Northern Ireland – HE Policy which can support the sustainable use of historic farmsteads to understand, protect it and address decline could be key to quality of rural and marine landscapes
- HE Policy creates opportunities **to invest in the care of and highlight the historic environment as a resource to animate landscapes and natural places, opportunities to enhance wellbeing and recreation and the resulting health benefits.**
- Heritage Assets and historic landscapes and features can be **identified, celebrated and enhanced** through local council Local Development Plans¹⁶⁸, currently under development.
- Plants and ecology have shaped the historic environment particularly the vernacular historic environment; HE Policy offers opportunities to amplify the **relationships between the historic environment, distinctive places and landscapes** which are interwoven with locally distinct geology, agricultural practises/marine industry or conditions which have led to traditional roof or vernacular forms or use of materials and crafts for example.
- Protection of the historic environment through HE Policy can also **contribute to protection of intangible cultural heritage** - traditional land-use practices, oral histories, placenames for example.

¹⁶⁸ [Local Development Plans – Departmental Directions – Plan Strategies | Department for Infrastructure](#)

- HE Policy can support opportunities to help people to **celebrate identity and local distinctiveness**, connecting the historic environment, distinctive places, species of plants or animals and seascapes may be lost – these are interwoven when contributing to local cultures and distinctiveness, supporting local people and visitors through tourism.
- **Urban Natural places can be protected through HE Policy**: Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesnes, the protected setting of Listed Buildings and Monuments provide opportunities for urban green infrastructure such as green corridors and urban sustainability zones.
- Given the widespread, diverse location and character of historic landscapes, HE Policy can support **inclusive access to natural and historic places, especially for underrepresented communities**. This could align with **health and wellbeing outcomes** and support broader Programme for Government goals.
- HE Policy has the potential to positively affect the character and/or setting of designated sites in Northern Ireland. For example, effect on Landscape Character Areas or AONBs [including (1) Binevenagh; (2) Causeway Coast and (3) Antrim Coast and Glens]. This is likely to be positive as outlined above.
- HE Policy has the potential to affect landscape, seascapes and visual amenity of the Northern Ireland north coastal and Rathlin Island area. This is likely to be positive as outlined above.
- HE Policy has the potential to affect the 24 Regional Seascape Character Areas. This is likely to be positive as outlined above.

Biodiversity

- Implementation of HE Policy is **unlikely to have significant negative effects** on Northern Ireland's biodiversity.
- Currently, spatial mapping exists which could provide a picture of the contribution of protected areas such as scheduled monument zones within for example farmland or Historic Parks and Gardens to biodiversity. This information cannot yet be collated, though work is underway to do so.
- Work is underway through the HED digital transformation to access statistics on climate change impacts to historic monuments, and the potential to use **monuments in agricultural landscapes as biodiversity areas** by the Historic Environment Division of Department for Communities.
- **Historic routes, designed landscapes and other heritage assets are often wildlife rich sites** which, appropriately managed, can act as important links in a national biodiversity network – for example pollination networks – supporting ecosystem services.
- The historic environment by nature of its **conservation and protection supports biodiversity**, contributing to a range of habitats, and influencing land use; there is potential for positive impacts on the baseline condition of Northern Ireland's natural environment when considered alongside the protection of the historic environment

- By integrating the approach between air, soil and water and historic assets it is possible to preserve heritage and contribute to mitigation in tandem – for example through good advice on the use of renewable energy in historic settings – a potential synergy with good design as emphasised in the Architecture and Built Environment Policy, and outcome for example with the Clean Air Strategy
- **Heritage assets and historic landscapes are also habitats, (for example bats, a protected species, are commonly found in protected structures);** their characteristics will often dictate what species can and can't thrive; the historic environment can help to understand whether certain habitats and species will prosper and inform decisions about restoration options and appropriate management.

Soil

- Implementation of HE Policy is unlikely to have significant negative effects on Soils in Northern Ireland. With 80% of the 1.4 million hectares of land in Northern Ireland in agricultural use¹⁶⁹, it's unsurprising that the majority of archaeological and heritage features are found on farmland¹⁷⁰; however measures are in place in respect of ensuring preservation of archaeological features on agricultural land through Cross Compliance Standards for farming – an example of two complimentary outcomes
- Caring for protected historic monuments on farmland which are an important repository of biodiversity and carbon capture on peatland **contributes towards the protection and management of land as well as flora and fauna**; HE Policy can support people to care for their special landscapes - whilst supporting the need for them to use their land for example through the EFS scheme
- Protected zones around heritage assets may passively or actively help to create **green 'corridors' or green/blue networks**
- Soils can have protections through designation as scheduled monuments or landscapes, and they have synergistic relationships with Archaeology and other heritage assets through for example protecting archaeological reserves and maintaining a balanced hydrology.
- There is opportunity to grow and produce organic building materials for example for thatching as part of a sustainable economy – affecting soil and ecology
- Climate change and/or development may exacerbate soil (which includes seabed sediments) erosion through extreme weather events or development causing currents to be re-directed and causing scouring; loss of these protective sediments could exacerbate impacts on marine historic environment assets and therefore policies to manage and protect these assets could have a positive effect on underwater and intertidal zones for example efforts to mitigate against climate change such as the **restoration of peatlands**; the loss of this protection could exacerbate impacts on marine historic environment assets.

¹⁶⁹ [Protecting historic monuments on farmland | Department for Communities](#)

¹⁷⁰ [Our Five Aims - Archaeology 2030](#)

Water

- Implementation of HE Policy is unlikely to have significant negative effects on the Northern Ireland transboundary marine and coastal environment, including but not limited to Northern Ireland marine biodiversity, flora, fauna, climatic factors, marine heritage (exacerbating damage to marine heritage from storms/increased erosion) and landscape/seascape.
- HE Policy is likely to have a positive effect on the marine environment in NI, by **supporting an integrated approach between protection of terrestrial and marine heritage assets and biodiversity potential – underpinned by research and knowledge**
- The protection of heritage assets contributes to **seascape character, local distinctiveness and scenic value** on coasts and intertidal zones, as well as islands for example Rathlin Island.
- HE Policy can support and promote **marine cultural landscapes - the interconnectedness of submerged heritage, coastal communities, and traditional maritime practices; HE Policy could support integrated coastal zone management through cultural landscape approaches, in the model of landscape partnerships.**
- Most of Northern Ireland's historic canal infrastructure is now protected through scheduling; these features and their future conservation may, alongside millraces, other heritage waterways/waterbodies, and historic parks and gardens have **a role in relation to considerations of water flow, and flooding**
- An emphasis on research and implementation of **climate change adaptation** in HE Policy applies also to the Marine landscape and seascapes, with the potential for positive effects

4.14.2 Potential Negative Impacts and Mitigation – Natural Places

- **Potential Effect:** increased access to historic places may have a slight negative impact for example through increased traffic or footfall, or higher demand for access to protected wreck sites. Increased air pollution could result from increased traffic/access to historic sites; biodiversity and habitats could be affected by an increase in footfall or access to heritage assets in natural protected zones.
- **Mitigation:** Visitor Impact Management could be monitored through policy support for capacity studies, visitor impact assessments, or site management plans. This could include HE Policy strategic-level support for developing heritage site management frameworks that include visitor pressure mitigation.
- **Mitigation:** Given the controls and licensing required for access and the development permissions required by the SPPS for protected areas, this should not be a threat. The higher level of protection of the settings around heritage assets, provide a more stringent protection through development controls like Listed Building and Scheduled Monument consents, and the removal of permitted development rights associated with protected structures meaning that consultation is required. However, it may also be possible to monitor visitor numbers periodically to note any increase and react accordingly. Managing carbon expenditure through carbon auditing and infrastructure considerations which emphasise that public transport can be considered when developing or enhancing access HE Policy suggests the *‘management of heritage assets in the face of environmental problems*.
- **Potential Effect:** aerial emissions can occur where for example archaeological sites are disturbed to retrieve artifacts or use of equipment on sensitive sites e.g. peat disturbance may result in carbon being released; there are also considerations when disturbing for example below ground archaeology - there is potential for some carbon being released into the air and for soils being impacted through large scale archaeological excavations
- **Mitigation:** the ‘Environmental Good Practice Guide for Archaeological Excavations¹⁷¹’ considers the potential environmental impacts of archaeological excavation including the potential for water pollution if inappropriately managed. HE Policy will emphasise best practice and the inter-relationship of one activity with another in terms of the environment – emphasising the need for best practice as an overarching sustainable development goal; the Peatlands Strategy NI acknowledges the relationship and encourages management between the effects of the restoration of peatlands and the potential for archaeological discovery
- **Potential Effect:** potential demand for lime and the use of local lime kilns could result from a resurgence in this material for mortars or renders, however it is unlikely that the scale of any increase would sufficiently result in a significant demand for local limestone

¹⁷¹ [Environmental Good Practice Guide for Archaeological Excavations | The Northern Ireland Executive](#)

- **Potential Effect:** with repair of local historic buildings could come a demand for stone – local stone from local quarries. It is unlikely that the scale of any increase would sufficiently result in a demand for local stone to such a degree as to make re-opening of quarries viable. It is often the case that stone with similar appearance and properties is matched to the original.
- **Potential Effect:** there is a risk that cumulative or indirect impacts (e.g. multiple small developments affecting landscape character or biodiversity over time) may have a negative effect.
- **Mitigation:** Monitoring and assessment through heritage and/or environmental auditing¹⁷² could be carried out firstly as a benchmark, then as a monitoring tool, supported by HE Policy which has safeguarding as one of its core aims.

Protected Habitats

- **Potential Effect:** HE Policy is not directly connected to the conservation of any Protected Natural Sites, however as a plan which covers most geographical areas including protected landscapes, it has the potential to impact on habitats and species for which Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA) have been designated. In acknowledgement of this, early consideration has been given to the need for **Appropriate Assessment** (AA) and a Habitats Assessment Screening has been carried out in parallel to the SEA Scoping. HE Policy aims will have a positive impact on historic places and assets, and therefore as it is highly unlikely that HE Policy will have any negative effects on SCAs or SPAs.
- **Mitigation:** If located within or near UK National Site Network sites, enhancement or enhanced access to buildings, sites, monuments, submerged wrecks and below ground archaeology would all be subject to planning and development guidance and controls which fall under Regional Development Strategy (RDS), the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) the Planning Act (NI) 2011, Historic Monuments and Archaeology Order 95 and the Protected Wrecks Act (1973). Consultation guidance which highlights the consideration of habitats can be added to any Historic Environment strategies and/or guidance which will flow from HE Policy. The main control over adverse impacts on habitats would be permissions required under the Habitats and Regulations Act which control any significant effects on UK National Site Network Sites at a project specific level.

¹⁷² [Heritage asset audit | Department for Communities](#)

4.14.3 Likely Impact without HE Policy:

- Without HE Policy, further decline in condition of the historic environment will impact the character and condition of landscapes and seascapes, potentially including habitats.
- Without HE Policy, opportunities to invest in the care of and highlight the historic environment as a resource to animate landscapes and natural places may be lost, missing opportunities to enhance wellbeing and recreation and the resulting health benefits.
- Plants and ecology have shaped the historic environment particularly the vernacular historic environment; opportunities to amplify the relationships between the historic environment, distinctive places and landscapes which are interwoven with locally distinct geology, agricultural practises/marine industry or conditions which have led to traditional roof or vernacular forms or use of materials and crafts for example (also lined to intangible cultural heritage) may be lost.
- Without HE Policy the opportunity to conserve, protect or enhance the historic environment as part of landscapes and seascapes which give people access to characterful places may be lost for example through former industrial heritage and ports as well as natural spaces which contain monuments and upstanding archaeology.
- Without HE Policy, opportunities to help people to celebrate identity and local distinctiveness, connecting the historic environment, distinctive places, species of plants or animals and seascapes may be lost – these are interwoven when contributing to local cultures and distinctiveness for tourism may be lost.

4.15 Part 4 - Suggested HE Policy Aims – Natural Places

4.15.1 Policy Aim 5: Aligning the care of heritage assets with distinctive places, landscapes and seascapes, supporting biodiversity

Alternatives:	• Do-nothing/Business as Usual – A number of landscape partnerships in Northern Ireland currently deliver fixed-term projects that combine heritage activity with community and environmental initiatives. While valuable, these projects rely on short-term funding and operate in isolation. Without an overarching strategic framework, activity remains fragmented, time-limited and unable to deliver long-term, targeted or measurable outcomes. This approach does not provide the integrated, coordinated action required to support landscapes, biodiversity and heritage at scale.
Selection:	Policy Aim : Aligning the care of heritage assets with distinctive places, landscapes and seascapes supporting biodiversity • HE Policy has the potential to deliver wide-ranging positive impacts across towns, rural areas, seascapes, and agricultural and vernacular landscapes by strengthening the protection, maintenance and restoration of historic places and their settings. • A policy approach that recognises the value of quality places across administrative boundaries—and balances protection with the social, environmental and economic benefits these places generate—offers a coherent, long-term and cross-government strategy. This is the preferred option for achieving this Policy Aim. • Northern Ireland’s landscapes have been shaped by thousands of years of human activity. The distinction between natural and built environments is therefore blurred. There is growing emphasis on managing those places to best recognize and support the interconnected character of natural and cultural values¹⁷³. HE Policy will support management approaches that reflect this interconnected character, helping people to care for their landscapes while also enabling sustainable land use. • Northern Ireland’s marine environment contains thousands of historic sites¹⁷⁴, including coastal defence¹⁷⁵ sites formed through conflict, settlement and industry. Rising sea levels pose emerging risks. HE Policy can help anticipate and respond to these changes. • HE Policy can promote inclusive access to natural and historic places, ensuring that underrepresented communities benefit from opportunities to experience and engage with these environments.

¹⁷³ [ICOMOS’ Work on Connections between Culture and Nature - International Council on Monuments and Sites](#)

¹⁷⁴ [Marine historic environment | Department for Communities](#)

¹⁷⁵ [Defence Heritage | Department for Communities](#)

	• HE Policy can also provide strategic support for participatory heritage management in natural places, strengthening local stewardship, resilience and community involvement. • HE Policy could provide a strategic commitment to data development and integration, e.g. biodiversity mapping of heritage assets, climate vulnerability assessments. • In tandem with plans like the Northern Ireland Environmental Improvement Plan¹⁷⁶, HE Policy can strike a balance between identification, conservation and a recognition that our coasts, landscapes and waterways are key to tourism and recreation so that future generations can also access, understand, enjoy and use them.		
Potential for Monitoring: HEADLINE METRICS	• SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT - Proportion of historic environment planning consultations that gained approval New Stat - Data capture to monitor land use cover for historic monuments in respect of biodiversity • New Stat - Number of heritage assets contributing to biodiversity corridors		
Potential for Monitoring: SUPPORTING METRICS	• New Stat - Number of recorded heritage assets in Green or Blue infrastructure plans (DAERA)/Number of heritage landscapes contributing to flood mitigation, pollination, etc • New Stat - Number of heritage trails in NI (NITB)/ % of urban heritage assets integrated into green infrastructure plans • New Stat – Number of heritage assets in SCAs or SPAs, ASSIs and AONBs (DAERA) • New Stat – Contribution of Marine Heritage to Marine Strategy Framework Directive indicators (MSFD) • Number of community climate projects involving heritage assets		
Effects on SEA Objectives:	Material Assets	++	HE Policy strengthens the protection, maintenance and reuse of historic assets and their settings.
	Landscape	++	HE Policy supports protection, appreciation and access to distinctive landscapes and seascapes
	Population / Health	+	HE Policy supports enhanced quality places and natural settings contribute to wellbeing, enjoyment and learning.
	Climatic Factors	+	HE Policy supports protecting and reusing assets carbon savings and climate-resilient landscapes
	Biodiversity, Flora, Fauna	+	Heritage controls (e.g. around monuments) can enhance habitats and support biodiversity.
	Air, Soil and Water	+	HE Policy supports natural carbon sinks and improved land/water management (e.g. flood mitigation).
	Cultural Heritage	++	HE Policy creates strong positive effects through improved protection, awareness and access to heritage. and access.

¹⁷⁶ [Environmental Improvement Plan for Northern Ireland | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

5 Planet

5.1 Part 1 - Climatic Factors – Relationship with other plans, programmes and strategies

Sea Topic - Climatic Factors				
Protection Relevant legislation: • Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland 2022)¹⁷⁷				
International Convention, declaration or charter	Legislative basis, environmental objectives or requirements of the plan or programme	How objectives and requirements of other plans or programmes might be taken on board in Historic Environment Policy (HE Policy) or how HE Policy might impact other plans, policies or programmes	Impacts on HE Policy	HE Policy may Impact outcomes
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (1994) And the Kyoto Protocol (1997)	This convention is legally binding. The UK ratified this Convention in 1992. The ultimate objective of the Convention is to stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations "at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic (human induced) interference with the climate system." It states that "such a level should be achieved within a time-frame sufficient to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change, to ensure that food production is not threatened, and to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner."	Historic Environment Policy aims will align with the objectives of this Convention through supporting and recommending the re-use and retrofit of heritage buildings to mitigate against the expenditure of carbon in construction and use.		

¹⁷⁷ [Climate Change Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2022](#)

	The Kyoto Protocol operationalizes the UNFCCC by committing industrialized countries and economies in transition to limit and reduce greenhouse gases (GHG) emissions in accordance with agreed individual targets. The Kyoto Protocol, like the Convention, is also designed to assist countries in adapting to the adverse effects of climate change. It facilitates the development and deployment of technologies that can help increase resilience to the impacts of climate change.			
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Paris Agreement (2015) 178	The UK ratified the Paris Agreement in 2016. The Paris Agreement provides a framework for governments as well as business and investors to keep global warming well below 2°C, pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C.	Historic Environment Policy aims will align with the objectives of this Convention through supporting and recommending the re-use and retrofit of heritage buildings to mitigate against the expenditure of carbon in construction and use.	✓	
Other plan/programme or strategy	Legislative basis, environmental objectives or requirements of the plan or programme	How objectives and requirements of other plans or programmes might be taken on board in Historic Environment Policy (HE Policy) or how HE Policy might impact other plans, policies or programmes	Impacts on HE Policy	HE Policy may impact outcomes
The Green Growth Strategy ¹⁷⁹	The Green Growth Strategy is the Northern Ireland Executive's multi-decade strategy, balancing climate, environment and the economy in Northern Ireland. It sets out the long-term vision for tackling the climate crisis in the right way.	HE Policy will support adaptation of and protection of heritage assets from the impacts of climate change, to sustain them for future generations, mitigating against climate change impacts. HE Policy will potentially underpin other climate change mitigation policies by recommending the adaptive re-use	✓	✓

¹⁷⁸ [UK climate action following the Paris Agreement - Climate Change Committee](#)

¹⁷⁹ [A Green Growth Strategy for Northern Ireland - Balancing our climate, environment and economy | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

	Green Growth Vision is for a net zero emissions, nature rich society where <i>‘we are reaping the economic, social, health and environmental benefits from a thriving green economy.’</i> Green Growth considers the wider environment as well as a green economy. The Green Growth approach advocates for tackling climate change, for example mitigating against impacts and reducing emissions of greenhouse gases.	of buildings to save carbon. There are further opportunities to use protected historic assets and their settings (such as monuments, buildings and parks, gardens and demesnes) to sustain and enhance biodiversity, which again, set out within HE Policy could influence other plans and strategies toward using their historic assets to meet Green Growth Strategy aims.		
UK Climate Change Risk Assessments¹⁸⁰ (CCRA) and Northern Ireland Climate Change Adaptation Plans¹⁸¹ (NICCAP)	The Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022¹⁸² (Act) sets a target of an at least 100% reduction in net zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050. There is a legal requirement on all Northern Ireland departments to exercise their functions, as far as is possible to do so, in a manner consistent with the achievement of the targets of the Act and carbon budgets set under it. Section 42 of the Act requires regulations to be made in regard to climate change reporting by public bodies. The type of information that public bodies may be reporting to DAERA is likely to include: • an assessment of the current and predicted impact of climate change in relation to the public body’s functions; • proposals and policies, with associated timescales, that the public body is bringing	Historic Environment Policy has the potential to shape environmental plans, policies, strategies and actions across the NI Executive which could positively impact climate change mitigation through the adaptive re-use of buildings to save carbon. There are further opportunities to promote and support use of protected assets and their settings (such as monuments, buildings and parks, gardens and demesnes) to sustain and enhance biodiversity – supporting a better environment. As advisors to other government departments through the Protocol for the Care of the Government Estate, HE Policy will be a tool for HED to guide other departments to use and re-use their heritage assets to mitigate against and adapt for climate change impacts – supporting a better environment. HE Policy aims will describe the framework against which how the Department for Communities cares for its own assets including State Care Monuments, to mitigate	✓	✓

¹⁸⁰ [UK Climate Change Risk Assessment 2022 - GOV.UK](#)

¹⁸¹ [Northern Ireland Climate Change Adaptation Programme | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

¹⁸² [Climate Change Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2022](#)

	forward for adapting to, or mitigating the effects of climate change; and assessments on the progress that the public body has made to implementing their proposals and policies.	against and adapt to climate change impacts and encourage biodiversity – supporting a better environment. HE Policy has been included in the NICCAP(3) as a means through which NI government is responding to climate change risks to : H11 Cultural heritage - [Coastal flooding, surface water flooding, windstorms and rainfall, ground movement, subsidence and weathering], H3 - People, communities and buildings – flooding, H5 - Building Fabric - Moisture, wind and driving rain, N18 – Landscape character and I4 – Bridges. HE Policy will advocate for the use of heritage assets which cover thousands of years to educate about NI’s changing climate over time. Heritage is a powerful vehicle to stress urgency about climate change in an emotive and engaging way.		
Northern Ireland Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP)¹⁸³	As noted above, the strategic objectives of the EIP include: • Zero waste and a highly developed circular economy, • Net zero greenhouse gas emissions and improved climate resilience and adaptability.	HE Policy will augment the EIP: through management and appreciation of the historic environment, as well as an emphasis on re-use and support for adaptation to climate change impacts, HE Policy supports to the EIP objectives to achieve: • Zero waste and a highly developed circular economy, • Net zero greenhouse gas emissions and improved climate resilience and adaptability.	✓	✓

¹⁸³ [Environmental Improvement Plan for Northern Ireland | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

Energy Strategy – Path to Net Zero Energy – the Department for the Economy¹⁸⁴	<i>‘The context for energy has changed substantially since the 2010 Strategic Energy Framework (SEF) was published. In June 2019 the UK became the first major economy to commit to a 100 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. This ‘net zero’ target represents a significant step-change in the commitment to addressing the climate crisis.’</i>	HE Policy aims will promote the re-use of buildings, contributing to a low-waste, low carbon society. They will also promote the skills and resources needed to support the green economy through retrofit and energy efficiency measures. The driest building is the most energy efficient – thus promoting the repair and maintenance of heritage buildings also promotes lower-energy living.		
Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy 2022-2040¹⁸⁵	there is now an increasing focus on peatland conservation and restoration and an appreciation of the carbon sequestering that they provide. Peatlands are categorised as having ‘Ecosystem Services’ These include: <i>‘Peatlands Ecosystem Services:</i> • <i>Climate regulation and adaptation (carbon capture and storage)</i> • <i>Unique biodiversity & habitat for wildlife</i> • <i>Drinking water filtration</i> • <i>Flood attenuation and water storage</i> • <i><u>An historical archive</u></i> • <i>Areas for recreation and understanding of our cultural heritage</i> • <i>Food production’</i>	Risks to heritage assets due to maladaptation include Peatland restoration works which carry the risk of inadvertent harm to both designated and undesignated heritage assets, including those not yet identified. Evidence from individual case studies highlights failure to consider heritage assets in peatland restoration can result in damage to archaeological remains. This risk has also been acknowledged through anecdotal reporting by agencies including Historic England, Historic Scotland, and Bord na Móna. Heritage can also help us build resilience, understand how people and places have responded to climatic events through history and tell the story of climate change, for example through the study of peatlands. HE Policy will highlight the need to manage peatlands in a way which creates economic benefits whilst understanding and protecting them as a resource to learn about the past.		

¹⁸⁴ [Northern Ireland Energy Strategy ‘Path to Net Zero Energy’ | Department for the Economy](#)

¹⁸⁵ [NI Peatland Strategy - Copy for EQIA Consultation. 8-8-2022. PDF_0.PDF](#)

Second Cycle Northern Ireland Flood Risk Management Plan 2021 - 2027¹⁸⁶	This Plan considers Cultural assets as part of its Strategic Environmental Assessment – it suggest working with HED and Archaeological Planning as well as adopting good standard working practices when considering works to manage flooding around heritage assets.	Risks to heritage assets due to maladaptation include flooding and drainage works which carry the risk of inadvertent harm to both designated and undesignated heritage assets, including those not yet identified. Heritage can also help us build resilience, understand how people and places have responded to climatic events through history and tell the story of climate change. HE Policy will highlight the need to manage adaptation of heritage assets and landscapes to flooding threats in a way which creates economic benefits whilst understanding and protecting assets and landscapes as a resource to learn about the past.		
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¹⁸⁶ [Second Cycle Northern Ireland Flood Risk Management Plan 2021-2027 | Department for Infrastructure](#)

5.2 Part 2 – Climatic Factors - Environmental Characteristics

SEA topic	SEA Objective
Climatic Factors	• reduce greenhouse gas emissions • electricity and gas use • reduce vulnerability to the effects of electricity generated from renewable energy • climate change e.g. flooding, disruption to sources and Combined Heat and Power (CHP) located in the area travel by extreme weather, etc

5.2.1 Climatic Factors - Existing Baseline

- The Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022¹⁸⁷ (Act) sets a target of an at least 100% reduction in net zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050 (set against the 1990 baseline) . Currently, evidence is available to demonstrate that re-use compares favourably in terms of whole life carbon to demolition and re-build. There is an opportunity to re-use heritage assets in order to mitigate against the impact of carbon expenditure in construction, alleviating Northern Ireland's contribution to climate change.
- The Independent Assessment used to help inform the third UK Climate Change Risk Assessment ¹⁸⁸(CCRA3) assesses 61 risks and opportunities from climate change to Northern Ireland, including to business, infrastructure, housing, the natural environment, our health and from the impacts of climate change internationally.
- HED and others partnered with the National Trust to pilot a Climate Change Hazard Mapping Tool, however no data has been collated yet. No NI specific figures are yet available to understand overall risk to heritage assets from climate change impacts.
- The Department for Communities, Historic Environment Division recently confirmed support for the joint [UK and Ireland Research Agenda for Climate Change and Heritage](#) led by Historic England. We will continue to work with our sister organisations and wider partners to ensure that the value of our heritage can be realised, that the effects of climate change can be fully understood and that our heritage is protected for future generations to enjoy

¹⁸⁷ [Climate Change Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2022](#)

¹⁸⁸ [third UK Climate Change Risk Assessment](#)

- Work is underway through the HED digital transformation to access statistics on climate change impacts to historic monuments, and the potential to use monuments in agricultural landscapes as biodiversity areas by Historic Environment Division of Department for Communities.
- The Northern Ireland Climate Change Adaptation Plan (NICCAP3) - The Climate Change Act 2008 (the 2008 Act) places a statutory duty on Northern Ireland Executive Departments to lay programmes before the Northern Ireland Assembly, which set out their objectives, policies, proposals and timelines for introducing those policies and proposals in response to the most recent UK Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA). To fulfil this legal requirement the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) has led on the development of a series of single coordinated adaptation programmes, which are known as the Northern Ireland Climate Change Adaptation Programme (NICCAP), since the 2008 Act came into effect. A Key Area of NICCAP is that of *'People and the Environment'* :
 - *This key area combines 4 thematic areas due to the co-dependencies between them and links the themes of Towns & Cities, Buildings, Health, and Community Preparedness & Response ... This key area is concerned with the impacts of climate change on our lived experiences and so looks at how the built and urban environment we live in interacts with our health and how climate change poses risks to these. It also recognises the importance of a community's ability to prepare for and respond to emergency situations such as extreme weather events linked to climate change. The chapters each lay out the identified risks and opportunities for each theme and the actions relating to these risks ..'*
- The National Trust has partnered with sister organisations to create and evolve guidance¹⁸⁹ for adaptation of heritage assets to climate impacts.
- Climate NI published a Net Zero NI Mitigation Planning toolkit, which aims to outline a consistent and robust methodology for organisations to develop a Mitigation Plan, taking account of regional context for organisations in Northern Ireland. It also aims to align with internationally agreed best practice, which is continually evolving. ¹⁹⁰ Climate NI has developed this toolkit to support organisations - including heritage organisations - in Northern Ireland to take the first steps in developing their Mitigation Plans. The approach enables organisations to respond to requests for information under the Climate Change Act (NI) 2022, and other national or international frameworks, by enabling them to:
 - Gather consistent and comparable data for organisational greenhouse gas accounting,
 - Identify highest emitting service/business areas,
 - Explore actions and opportunities to put in place an organisational Mitigation Plan, and
 - Monitor and evaluate progress on implementing actions and reducing emissions.

¹⁸⁹ [Adapting for climate change | National Trust](#)

¹⁹⁰ [NI Toolkit | Develop Effective Climate Adaptation Plans | Climate NI](#)

The images below give an indication of the breadth and location of Climatic Factors in Northern Ireland.

Fig 30 - Coastal Erosion Study in NI (NIEA Marine Map Viewer – Copyright)

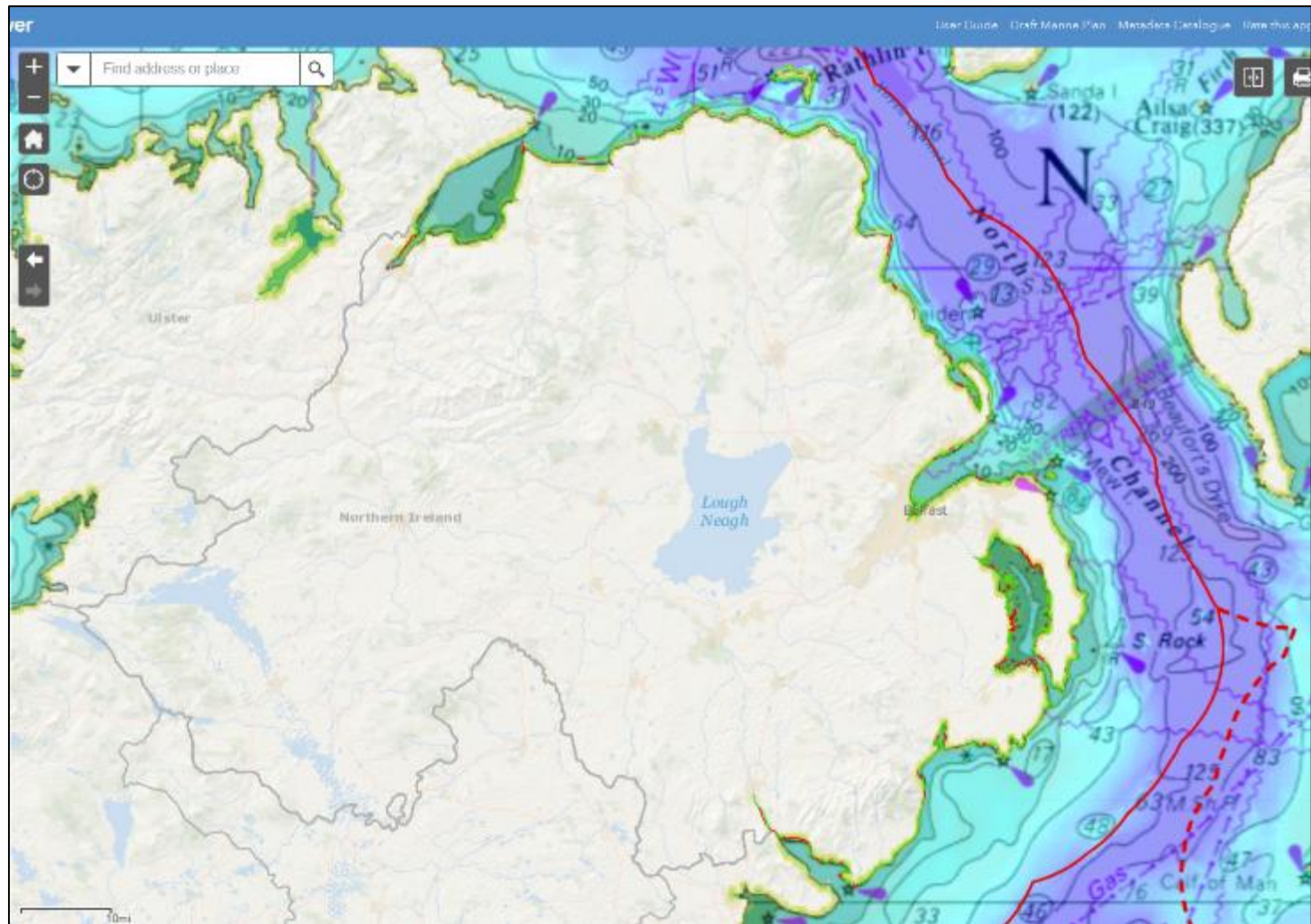


Fig 31 – National Trust Hazard Mapping tool showing NI

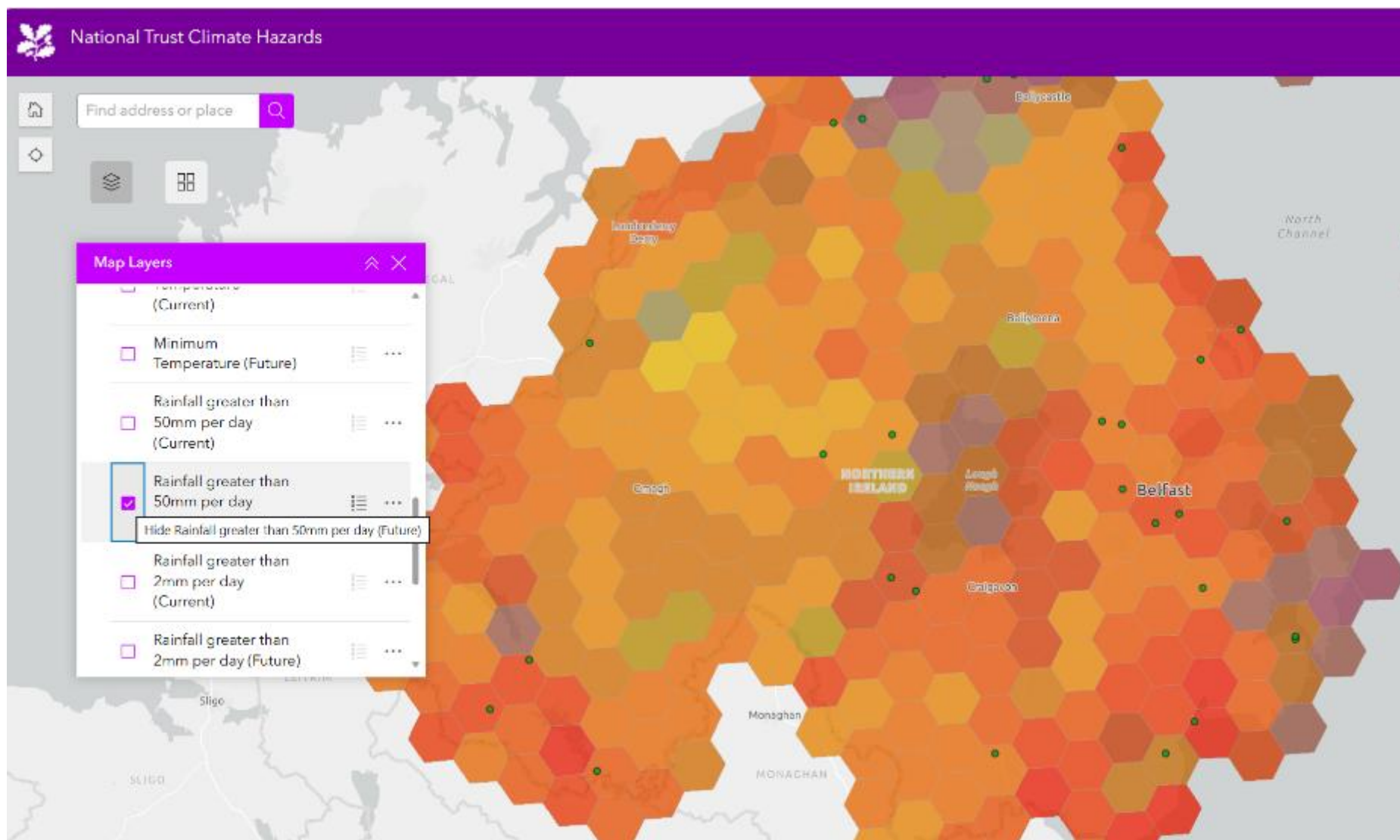
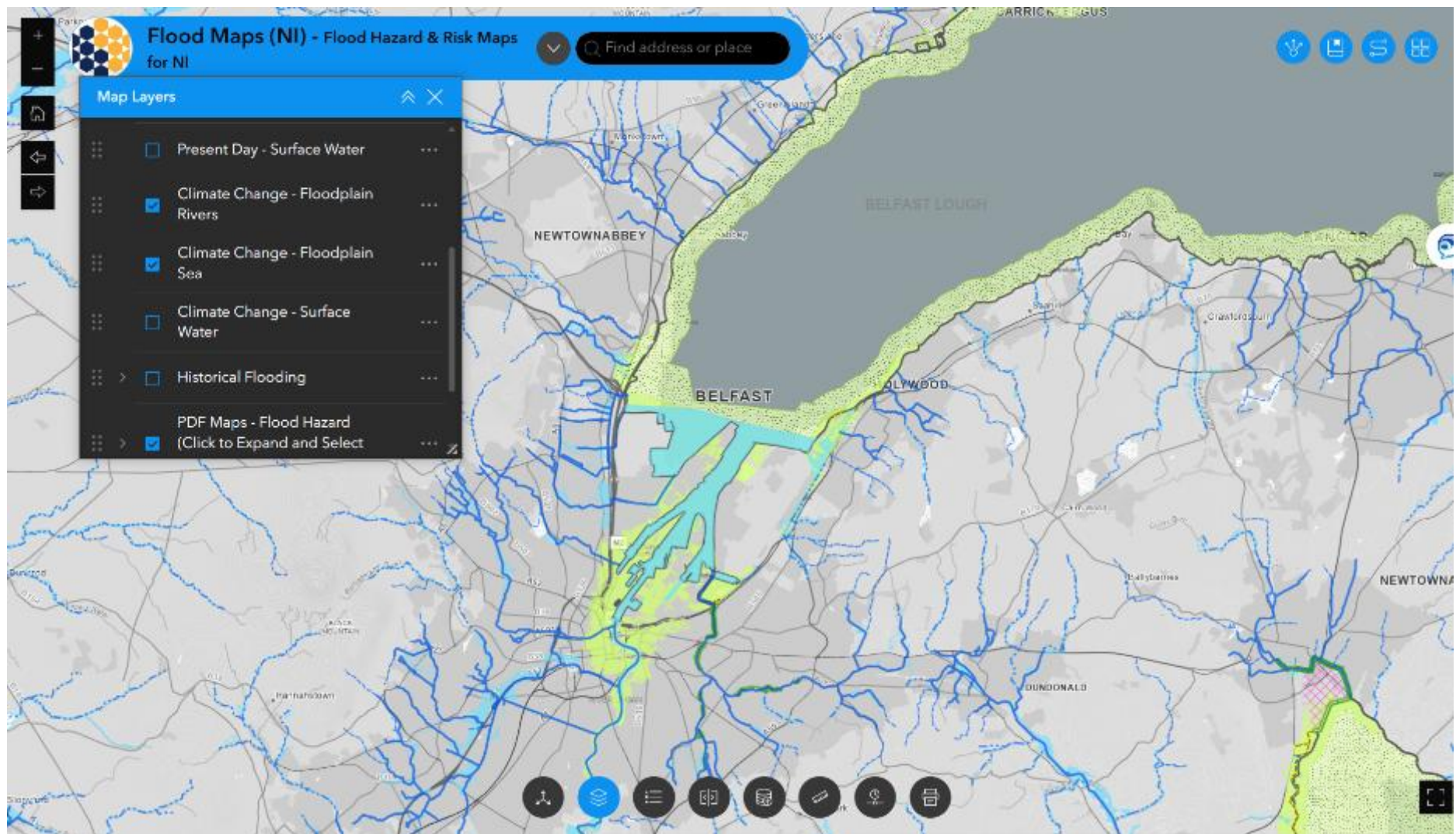


Fig 32 – Flood Risk maps – Flood Maps (NI) Department for Infrastructure



5.2.2 Climatic Factors - Environmental problems

- Scientific evidence from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPPC) has highlighted the dramatic changes to our climate and their causes. Northern Ireland faces changes to its climate over the next century. Projections suggest that we may face hotter, drier summers and warmer, wetter winters as a result of climate change.
- There is potential to use Climate vulnerability indices or spatial overlays that combine socio-economic vulnerability with environmental risk. These could help prioritize heritage assets most at risk, however this work has not yet been commissioned.
- Climate records suggest that the mean annual temperature has been steadily increasing since the end of the 19th century. The number of days per year where the temperature exceeded 20°C has also been increasing in the same timescale.
- In 2022, Northern Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions were estimated to be 21.3 MtCO₂e, a reduction of 26 per cent since 1990 baseline levels. The largest sectors in terms of emissions in 2022 were agriculture (29 per cent), domestic transport (18 per cent) and buildings and product uses (15 per cent).
- Heritage assets are at risk of economic exposure (e.g. insurance costs, repair liabilities) due to climate impacts on heritage assets.

5.3 Part 3 – Planet – HE Policy Impact

SEA topic	SEA Objective
Climatic Factors	• reduce greenhouse gas emissions • electricity and gas use • reduce vulnerability to the effects of electricity generated from renewable energy • climate change e.g. flooding, disruption to sources and Combined Heat and Power (CHP) located in the area travel by extreme weather, etc

5.3.1 Potential impact of HE Policy on the Planet

- Implementation of HE Policy is unlikely to have significant negative effects on Northern Ireland’s climatic factors.
- Northern Ireland is at Risk from climate change impacts. There are challenges to the historic environment now and in the future from climate impacts – in Northern Ireland this will mean more frequent storms leading to more frequent flooding¹⁹¹, soil erosion and storm damage. Heritage assets may be at risk from coastal, fluvial and pluvial flooding, erosion and wild fires related to a changing climate, changing land use and agricultural practices.
- The Predicted climate change effects may impact the historic environment at a strategic level particularly increased incidence of extreme weather, affecting the condition in particular of heritage assets already at risk through neglect or vacancy. The full picture is not yet visible or understood in NI. **HE Policy can support monitoring of condition as well as strategic aims to adapt heritage assets to climate change, such as flood resilience, coastal erosion monitoring, or heat stress on materials.**
- Maintain Our Heritage (2004) reports that gentle ‘mitigation’¹⁹² like regular inspections and systematic preventive maintenance are cost effective methods of preserving heritage buildings, avoiding disruption and minimising risk¹⁹³ and uncertainty – including the uncertain impacts of climate change. **HE policy can support climate vulnerability assessment of heritage assets.**

¹⁹¹ [Historic Environment Toolkit | Department for Communities](#)

¹⁹² miti-ga-tion: the action of reducing the severity, seriousness, or painfulness of something

¹⁹³ [Climate Change Risk Assessment \(CCRA3\) Evidence for Northern Ireland | Climate NI](#)

- HE Policy can have a role in mitigation against climate change by **promoting and contributing to effective re-use, retrofit and adaptation of traditional buildings**; The Draft Circular Economy Strategy says that ‘*More re-using of building materials and components, a greater focus on renovation and retrofitting rather than new-build can produce a 7.7% decrease in material footprint..*’¹⁹⁴; data on this opportunity en masse is not available specific to NI, however data does exist (Historic England¹⁹⁵, Historic Scotland the Sustainable Traditional Buildings Alliance and IHBC.)¹⁹⁶. HE Policy can support training and capacity-building in conservation trades to support climate adaptation and energy efficiency in heritage.
- Ulster Architectural Heritage (2021) report that maintenance helps in coping with climate change. HE Policy can support advice on making heritage assets energy efficient – including maintaining them at small scale (roofs and gutters) to keep walls dry.
- For the 12 month period January 2024 to December 2024, 44 per cent of total metered electricity consumption in Northern Ireland was generated from metered renewable sources located in Northern Ireland. HE Policy can provide guidance on selecting renewable energy sources for heritage assets or their settings; HE Policy can assist owners in adopting low-carbon lifestyles – including accurate EPC ratings.
- **Heritage can also help us build resilience, understand how people and places have responded to climatic events through history and tell the story of climate change, for example through study of peatlands** ; of for example the mean annual temperature for Northern Ireland has been calculated from the Armagh Observatory temperature records - AOP is a heritage asset and holds one of the longest records of weather data in the world¹⁹⁷.
- In the Listed Building Condition Survey¹⁹⁸, condition was cross-referenced with areas of high climate change risk (flooding etc). No correlation was noted, however this may be a long-term trend, and therefore this outcome remains inconclusive – research and monitoring supported by HE Policy can monitor climate impacts.
- HE Policy which **supports innovation can encourage remote sensing, GIS, or AI-based monitoring tools that could support climate resilience planning for heritage**.
- HE Policy could empower communities, support climate justice, or promote wellbeing through **stewardship of heritage places**.
- HE Policy which emphasises **sustainable development** aligns the principles of material reuse, salvage, and heritage-led regeneration with circular principles. The Draft Circular Economy Strategy says that ‘*More re-using of building materials and components, a greater focus on renovation and retrofitting rather than new-build can produce a 7.7% decrease in material footprint..*’¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁴ [Circular Economy Strategy for Northern Ireland | Department for the Economy](#)

¹⁹⁵ [Monitoring and Measuring the Built Historic Environment’s Pathway to Net Zero | Heritage Counts | Historic England](#)

¹⁹⁶ [When Retrofit Goes Wrong | Heritage Counts | Historic England](#)

¹⁹⁷ [Weather Observations | Armagh Observatory & Planetarium | County Armagh](#)

¹⁹⁸ [Listed Buildings Survey](#)

¹⁹⁹ [Circular Economy Strategy for Northern Ireland | Department for the Economy](#)

- HE Policy could explore research to develop metrics/statistics on **re-use, EPCs, and carbon savings which are measurable and accountable.**

5.3.2 Potential Negative Impacts and Mitigation

- **Potential effect:** potential risks to heritage assets are due to maladaptation (for example due to incorrect specification for retrofit causing material harm).
- **Mitigation:** HE Policy which supports best practice and leadership, guidance and research, and partnerships with other parts of the UK and Ireland such as the North-South Memorandum of Understanding on Climate Action and Cultural Heritage to understand and adapt to climate change impacts and low carbon living will mitigate against this risk.
- **Potential effect:** Risks to heritage assets due to maladaptation also include Peatland restoration works which carry the risk of inadvertent harm to both designated and undesignated heritage assets, including those not yet identified. Evidence from individual case studies highlights failure to consider heritage assets in peatland restoration can result in damage to archaeological remains. This risk has also been acknowledged through anecdotal reporting by agencies including Historic England, Historic Scotland, and Bord na Móna.
- **Mitigation:** HE Policy, advice and outreach can highlight the need to manage peatlands in a way which creates economic benefits whilst understanding and protecting them as a resource to learn about the past, and the benefits of working with others which has been highlighted in the Northern Ireland Peatlands Strategy.

5.3.3 Likely Impact without HE Policy:

- Without HE Policy, opportunities to use the historic environment as a resource may be lost. The opportunity to promote and calculate re-use in particular of buildings as a contributor to saving carbon may be lost – important as buildings and the construction industry are one of the top ‘spenders’ of carbon in Northern Ireland
- With the drive towards energy efficiency, heritage buildings are considered inefficient. With that perception comes a preference for new-build, leaving historic buildings at the risk of vacancy – without HE Policy to promote the adaptability and support energy efficiency measure in historic buildings, there may be an increased risk of vacancy.
- As people adapt to climate change risks, the drive towards energy efficiency may mean that without leadership, resources and advice, buildings and monuments or archaeology are at heightened risk of maladaptation

- HE Policy can support the mapping of and recommend preventative steps against climate change impacts on heritage assets. Without HE Policy to direct these actions, opportunities may be lost and assets put at a higher risk, for example from flooding, coastal erosion or storm surges.
- Without HE Policy, opportunity for funding mechanisms, incentives, or green finance to support adaptation and retrofit at scale may be lost.

5.4 Part 4 - Suggested HE Policy Aims – Planet

5.4.1 Policy Aim 6: Maintaining and managing the historic environment in the face of environmental problems

Alternatives:	Do-nothing/Business as Usual – currently, climate change mitigation strategies are focused on in-use carbon. HE Policy creates an opportunity to lead on and advocate across government and elsewhere for the re-use of existing historic buildings and structures, consider reinvigorating and making best use of existing spaces or assets as an investment - ahead of creating new things at the expense of the environment. A ‘re-use first’ policy could be enacted, but the opportunity for central, high level strategic direction which is a material consideration in development control might be lost without HE Policy.
Selection:	Maintaining and managing the historic environment in the face of environmental problems • HE Policy will be a material consideration in future Planning decisions, having a positive effect for the historic environment and therefore potentially having a wide-reaching effect across NI on mitigating against and addressing climate change impacts through building re-use. • <i>‘The problem might be not that these assets are old, just that they are old-fashioned.’</i>²⁰⁰ Studies²⁰¹ show that retrofit and re-use of historic buildings pays off in terms of carbon counting in the long term²⁰² versus demolition and re-build. Re-use is a ‘win-win’ for places, people and planet²⁰³. HE Policy can guide others on how to curate energy efficient, climate resilient heritage assets which meet the need for a low-carbon future right across NI. • In the future, furthering understanding of NI specific climate hazards²⁰⁴ will help NI to understand and plan for these risks. But our actions to counter risks don’t need to be costly or threatening. HE Policy can support people to look after heritage assets, protecting them from harm, and saving them money in the long term²⁰⁵. • HE Policy can support people to ensure that historic places including land and seascapes²⁰⁶ are protected against extreme weathering and are adapted to withstand environmental threats. • Within that is the challenge of ensuring that the significance of heritage assets is sustained in the race to net-zero.

²⁰⁰ DfC Placemaking Group as part of HCC Programme engagement

²⁰¹ [UNDERSTANDING CARBON IN THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT](#)

²⁰² [Whole Life Carbon Guidance | Department for Communities](#)

²⁰³ Elefante *‘The Greenest Building is the one that already exists’*

²⁰⁴ [National Trust Climate Hazards](#)

²⁰⁵ Similarly, SIB (2020) highlights that regular preventive maintenance can prevent costly renovations in the future and increase the lifespan of historic materials.

²⁰⁶ [Y Môr a Ni: Ocean Literacy for Wales | North Wales Wildlife Trust](#)

	- Recognizing NI's landscapes as an important repository of biodiversity and of carbon capture on peatland, whilst also containing buried archaeology through HE Policy could collaboratively work towards protecting and sustaining them as a resource. - Owners and managers of heritage assets may avail of advice and support under HE Policy to enact best practice – considering carbon expenditure in the management of buildings and sites, including energy, access and supply of goods and services - HE Policy could aim to embed climate literacy in heritage interpretation, education, and outreach—using heritage to tell the story of climate change and resilience.		
Potential for Monitoring: HEADLINE METRICS	CLEANER ENVIRONMENT – - New Stat - Reporting to NICCAP – Measuring Re-use of historic buildings' contribution to carbon mitigation - New Stat - Data capture to monitor levels of re-use/adaptation of historic buildings - data may include reporting on numbers of buildings removed from the Heritage at Risk NI database, CAT heritage transfers, reflecting Carbon mitigation detailed for Gov't buildings - New Stat - PfCGE – Gov't contribution to mitigation/carbon offset through continued use, repair and CAT - New Stat - % of assets assessed for climate vulnerability		
Potential for Monitoring: SUPPORTING METRICS	- Consideration of the links between climate change indicators and listed building condition as recorded every 10 years in the listed building condition survey for reporting to NICCAP - Condition of Monuments (including Scheduled Monuments and Monuments in State Care) – as a figure and trend and relating to climate change indicators - New Stat – Numbers of Planning applications for change of use of Listed Buildings (Dfl) = re-use - New Stat - data on condition of other parts of the historic environment. This is harder to access, but we aim to develop more robust data for monuments in coming years - New Stat - level of funding for energy efficiency in HBs - New Stat - % or Number of Listed Buildings with EPC over C rating		
Effects on SEA Objectives:	Material Assets	++	HE Policy can have a highly positive effect on material assets through the reduction of waste and promotion of uptake of sustainable, traditional materials, the role the historic environment plays in providing existing infrastructure, built environments and landscapes and actions to address threats to the quality of heritage places through neglect of material assets. Material assets like buildings or historic infrastructure may be re-used to combat climate change – again leading to conservation.
	Landscape	++	HE Policy supports the protection of landscape character, local distinctiveness and scenic value.
	Population / Health	++	HE Policy supports improved access, understanding and community involvement in heritage care

	Climatic Factors	++	HE Policy supports activity which mitigates emissions through re-use and supports climate adaptation. to the effects of climate change.
	Biodiversity, Flora, Fauna	+	HE Policy can protect settings with mutual benefit for habitats and species
	Air, Soil and Water	+	HE Policy supports reduced construction emissions and better energy guidance support environmental quality.
	Cultural Heritage	++	HE Policy strongly safeguards designated, undesignated and intangible heritage, including assets at risk, and supports climate-resilience.

6 People

6.1 Population and Human Health

6.2 Part 1- Population and Human Health – Relationship with other plans, programmes and strategies

SEA Topic - Population and Human Health				
Protection				
Cultural Heritage in Northern Ireland is treated as a human rights issue, ensuring that communities' identities, traditions and expressions are respected and safeguarded. These rights are protected through: • European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR Article 10)²⁰⁷ • The Good Friday (Belfast) Agreement²⁰⁸				
International Convention, declaration or charter	Legislative basis, environmental objectives or requirements of the plan or programme	How objectives and requirements of other plans or programmes might be taken on board in Historic Environment Policy (HE Policy) or how HE Policy might impact other plans, policies or programmes	Impacts on HE Policy	HE Policy may impact outcomes
The Paris Convention (1954)	This convention recommends best practice and doctrine. Also known as the Paris Convention of 1954, its main relevant obligations are: • Development of the national contribution to the common cultural heritage of Europe (article 1)	Historic Environment Policy will support and enhance the objectives of this Charter in Northern Ireland, with aims to safeguard heritage, and promote equal and common access to heritage, for people's benefit.	✓	

²⁰⁷ [European Convention on Human Rights](#)

²⁰⁸ [The Belfast Agreement - GOV.UK](#)

	- Safeguarding objects of European cultural value placed under government control (article 5) - Ensuring reasonable access to such objects (article 5) The UK has been a signatory of the Paris Convention since 1954.			
2003 UNESCO Convention on the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003)	This Convention, ratified by the UK in 2024 recognizes traditional craftsmanship, oral traditions and expressions, performing arts, social practices, rituals and festive events, knowledge and practices related to nature and the universe.	HE Policy will support this convention, including a commitment to an increased inventory of Northern Ireland's traditions, including practices inspired by diaspora communities, and to better safeguarding of the most at-risk traditions and crafts. The link between tangible and intangible heritage is self-evident; supporting activity which uses, celebrates and understands historic assets and places will support and enhance the objectives of this Convention to protect intangible cultural heritage, but also for people to interpret, enjoy and understand tangible heritage.	✓	
Other plan/programme or strategy	Legislative basis, environmental objectives or requirements of the plan or programme	How objectives and requirements of other plans or programmes might be taken on board in Historic Environment Policy (HE Policy) or how HE Policy might impact other plans, policies or programmes	Impacts on HE Policy	HE Policy may impact outcomes
Programme for Government (PfG) 2024-2027²⁰⁹ Wellbeing Framework	PfG includes a Wellbeing Framework, whose key indicators are a combination of social, environmental, economic, and democratic factors which are essential for society to flourish.	Historic Environment Policy has the potential to shape environmental actions which will positively impact the NI Wellbeing Framework; supporting research and evidence which demonstrates that improved quality of life can be achieved through the care of and enhancement of the historic environment.	✓	✓

²⁰⁹ [Programme for Government 2024-2027 'Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most' | The Northern Ireland Executive](#)

		HE Policy should enhance and expand the environmental protection objectives within future PfG(s) which will be formed in the lifetime of this policy – for example ‘ <i>..that everyone feels the benefit of a growing economy, improved environment and a safer and fairer society</i> ’.		
Building Inclusive Communities 2020 – 2025 – Department for Communities	DfC’s Building Inclusive Communities Strategy sets out how DfC will work across government, its Arm’s Length Bodies and with communities in delivering their common purpose of Supporting People, Building Communities, Shaping Places.	Historic Environment Policy supports actions which will positively impact the environment – helping to shape places, build communities and support people. HE Policy will provide high level advice on Government’s attitude to the historic environment which will influence Department for Communities Strategy and future strategies, demonstrating how it can meet its objectives through caring for and making full use of the potential of the historic environment.	✓	✓
Children and Young People’s (CYP) Strategy 2020-2030 – NI Executive²¹⁰	Among the outcomes that the CYP Strategy aspires to are that: <i>‘Children and young people are physically and mentally healthy..</i> <i>Children and young people enjoy play and leisure..</i> <i>Children and young people learn and achieve..</i> <i>Children and young people experience economic and environmental well-being..</i> <i>Children and young people make a positive contribution to society..</i>	During the consultation for the CYP strategy, stakeholders stressed that poor quality environments can have a negative impact on health and well-being. Children and young people living in more socio-economically deprived circumstances often live in lower quality environments and can be exposed to a greater range and intensity of environmental risks. HE Policy which monitors young peoples’ participation levels (including education, access, volunteering and employment) in heritage can begin to form a picture of how heritage can enable children to have a good start in life. If historic environments are well cared for, this overall contribution to quality environments can again have a positive impact on young people, aligning with the CYP Strategy.	✓	✓

²¹⁰ [final-executive-children-and-young-people's-strategy-2020-2030](#)

	<i>Children and young people live in a society which respects their rights..’</i>			
NI Anti-Poverty Strategy²¹¹ (Currently out to Public Consultation)	The Anti-Poverty strategy aspires to eliminate disadvantage, making all parts of NI equal.	HE Policy recognises that we ALL should have access to the historic environment and use it equally. Our shared heritage, found all over Northern Ireland, has the power to enrich all of our lives. A reversal of dilapidation/regeneration using vacant heritage buildings in areas of deprivation will be a key aim of HE Policy and so could align with the strategies to ‘level up’ communities throughout NI.	✓	✓
Volunteering Strategy and Action plan – Department for Communities²¹²	<i>The volunteering strategy aims to align activities across government, the voluntary and community sector and other stakeholders to re-energise and increase levels of volunteering. The strategy, which is accompanied by an action plan, aims to create the conditions under which volunteering activity within Northern Ireland can develop and flourish.</i>	HE Policy will acknowledge and encourage the key role of volunteers in the care of heritage assets and places – often at the heart of communities for example graveyards, historic parks and gardens, and the grounds of historic buildings. The side benefits of volunteering – bringing people together and community cohesion – could work in tandem with the care of places, including the opportunity for communities to ‘Adopt’ monuments or spaces.	✓	✓
Independent Review of Education And TransformED NI: Transforming	The Independent Review of Education panel published its final report on 13 December 2023. This final report, which is the culmination of two years work, outlines key recommendations from the Independent Review of Education.	HE Policy could support recommendations from the Independent Review which highlighted the potential of heritage to help maintain interest in education among teens: <i>“For instance museums and local heritage assets can be used to build upon and enrich the existing curriculum, but they could do more to educate local learners about cultural heritage; this would help to build community, a sense of</i>	✓	✓

²¹¹ [Consultation on NI Executive Anti-Poverty Strategy | Department for Communities](#)

²¹² [Volunteering strategy and action plan | Department for Communities](#)

teaching and learning: a strategy for Educational Excellence in Northern Ireland²¹³	Key recommendations include the need to prioritise investment in education, promote learner’s learning together, expand early years education, reconfigure the network of schools, simplify the management of education, reform the curriculum and increase the age of educational participation to 18. The report says: <i>‘There are some children who find school difficult from the outset, but more begin to experience problems in late primary/early post-primary years...In early adolescence brain changes of a different type from those of the early years are occurring...For the most part education systems ignore these developments...access to a wide range of extra-curricular programmes will allow learners to pursue their own interests and talents in a more informal setting and will help improve learners sense of self-worth, help them develop wider skills and build their confidence, ensuring they feel fully engaged and committed to their education.</i> TransformED NI outlines a comprehensive strategy for the transformation of teaching and learning in Northern Ireland. In April 2024, the Department published the TransformED Delivery Plan which translates the strategy’s vision for educational excellence into actionable steps.	<i>identity and social cohesion. Local heritage should be formally integrated throughout the curriculum (a new policy is required). This may engage more learners including disadvantaged learners and allow them to connect with their local community”.</i> HE Policy could further support the TransformED strategy – for example <i>‘raising the age of education participation so all learners should, by law, remain in education, apprenticeship or training until age 18’</i> could be met using more heritage apprenticeship opportunities. When considering the reform of the curriculum, heritage assets which are local to schools are a free, existing resource for learning about history, and also potentially other topics like climate change. HE Policy can promote using heritage assets both for formal education and for informal learning. Pride in place can start at an early age, through learning about ‘my place’.		
Tackling Rural Poverty & Social Isolation – A New Framework 	<i>The Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation (TRPSI) Framework is a rural initiative led by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DAERA) which aims to tackle poverty and social isolation in rural areas</i>	80% of historic monuments are found on farmland. Many historic settlements, landscapes and small villages are centred on historic layouts, infrastructure like bridges and canals and heritage buildings like churches and features like		

²¹³ [TransformED NI: Transforming teaching and learning: a strategy for Educational Excellence in Northern Ireland | Department of Education](#)

Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs²¹⁴	<i>through organisations working in partnership to design and implement measures which target the needs of vulnerable people. TRPSI is one of a number of complementary initiatives led by DAERA which are aimed at helping to ensure that the needs of rural communities are addressed.</i>	market squares. Key to HE Policy will be acknowledging, documenting/recording and making people aware of the valuable resources on their doorsteps by giving them access to information and supporting them to look after their assets.		
International Relations Strategy – The Executive Office	The key objectives of the Strategy include bringing investment, exporting opportunities, jobs, tourists, new skills and best practice into Northern Ireland. This will be achieved by ‘..promoting NI’s capabilities internationally and developing mutually beneficial relationships with targeted countries, regions and international organisations.’	HE Policy can support and continue to support the International Relations Strategic Aims/Objectives, using the historic environment. This includes long term aspirations to: • Strengthen international economic position and support investment, trade, tourism, agriculture, community and conflict resolution work, science and research; • Develop and maintain effective relationships with targeted countries and regions to help contribute to Programme for Government priorities; • Proactively seek opportunities for sharing information and best practice and build on international reputation and experience for facilitating peace building and post conflict reconstruction; • Work with the British and Irish Governments; the US Administration and the European Union to help promote international objectives and identify opportunities; • Build on international connections and reputation in the areas of culture, art, sport and ente <i>For example, Historic Environment Scotland’s ‘Heritage Places, Breathing Spaces’ campaign</i>		

²¹⁴ [Tackling Rural Poverty & Social Isolation – A New Framework | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

About Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC)²¹⁵	<i>'The 'Together: Building a United Community' (T:BUC) Strategy, published on 23 May 2013, reflects the Executive's commitment to improving community relations and continuing the journey towards a more united and shared society.'</i>	<i>has launches to boost wellbeing through connection to heritage</i> rtainment; • Contribute to international development using local expertise and build partnerships with key organisations and countries. The T:BUC Strategy outlines how government, community and individuals are working to build a united community and achieve change against the following key priorities: • our children and young people • our shared community • our safe community • our cultural expression Each of the four key priorities also has a set of tangible and practical commitments. The Strategy is delivered through T:BUC funded programmes, which HE Policy will support – for example the 'Urban Villages Programme', the 'Peace Plus Programme' and good relations programmes. In particular, the strategy supports actions in contested spaces, and options to develop shared space in a rural context. Historic buildings and spaces can provide neutral venues and spaces with a shred sense of history and common ground which stretches beyond modern memory.		
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²¹⁵ [About Together: Building a United Community \(T:BUC\) | The Executive Office](#)

Heritage, Culture and Creativity Programme²¹⁶	The HCC Programme provides a focal point for the Minister’s responsibilities across culture and the historic environment. It is the platform to connect with, and influence, relevant policies, strategies and actions across the Executive departments, in local government and more widely	As part of the HCC Programme, We will compliment other ‘Impact’ areas like the Arts, Libraries and Museums whose value is not always expressed in economic terms. HE Policy will combine with others to develop of a strong framework that will support the growth of the contribution of our culture and historic environment; the appreciation of this contribution and the role of the Department as a focal point for this, helping it to significantly influence relevant strategies across central and local government.		
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²¹⁶ [The Heritage, Culture and Creativity Programme Purpose and Framework](#)

6.3 Part 2 – Population and Human Health - Environmental Characteristics

6.3.1 Population and Human Health - Existing Baseline

The Environment (general)

Public Attitudes²¹⁷ : - NI Environmental Statistics report 2025 reported that:

- The level of public concern about environmental issues was high in 2024/25 - 73 per cent* were very or fairly concerned about the environment.
- Pollution of air, water and soil and illegal dumping of waste and litter were the greatest environmental concerns for households at 28 and 27 per cent respectively.
- When asked what they considered important in helping to tackle climate change in Northern Ireland, most people said ‘protecting the environment’. Most answer categories were popular with over two thirds selecting protecting the environment (69 per cent), followed by reducing emissions (63 per cent), grow the economy in an environmentally sustainable way (61 per cent) and ensure society can adapt to changes brought about by climate change (57 per cent), reusing, recycling and disposing of waste products appropriately 91 per cent, reducing food waste 70 per cent, reducing consumption of household utilities 59 per cent
- The most common actions taken by households for environmental reasons in 2024/25 were reusing, recycling and disposing of waste products appropriately, reducing food waste and reducing consumption of household utilities.
- Connecting people with nature is key to a thriving environment. The People in the Outdoors Monitor for Northern Ireland (POMNI) shows that regular outdoor participation is linked to stronger environmental concern and behaviour. However, access to, and participation in outdoor recreation is not equal across society. POMNI data shows a correlation between limited access to natural spaces and lower participation levels, with older age groups, those living in rural areas and deprived areas reporting less access to greenspace and trails. In April 2025 47.8 per cent of households are within 400m of greenspace >2ha or off-road trails. This is a decrease of 0.1 per cent from 2024 (47.9 per cent). The 2023 baseline was also 47.9 per cent.
- 74.7 per cent of households are within 1km of greenspace >2ha or off-road trails. This is a decrease of 0.1 per cent from 2024 (74.8 per cent). This was unchanged from the 2023 baseline of 74.8 per cent.
- 84.3 per cent of households are within 2km of greenspace >20ha or off-road trails. This is similar to 2024 and the 2023 baseline This indicator is also used as a wellbeing framework indicator in the latest Programme for Government (PfG) 2024-2027.

²¹⁷ NISRA’s Continuous Household Survey (CHS) - [CHS survey documents](#) | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency

- Car travel continues to dominate the way people in NI do most of their day-to-day travelling.²¹⁸ Information on how and why people travel in Northern Ireland including the number of journeys per person, average distance travelled can be sourced from the Department of Infrastructure's Northern Ireland Travel Survey section.
- The Independent Assessment used to help inform the third UK Climate Change Risk Assessment²¹⁹ (CCRA3) assesses 61 risks and opportunities from climate change to Northern Ireland, including to business, infrastructure, housing, the natural environment, our health and from the impacts of climate change internationally. Risks requiring action include:
 - Risks to people, communities and buildings from flooding.
 - Risks to cultural heritage.
 - Risks to business sites from flooding.

Historic Environment

- NISRA's Continuous Household survey reported in 23/24 that people visiting a heritage site had statistically greater life satisfaction than those who did not (scoring 7.9 versus 7.6 respectively)
- In the Listed Building Owners' Survey²²⁰ The fourth most cited advantage of owning a listed building was that it benefits mental health and wellbeing (21% of respondents).
- In the Monument Owners' Survey²²¹ almost a third of monument owners said that an advantage to owning a monument was the 'feel good factor'.²²²
- Data on how the historic environment contributes to health and well-being has been recorded in other jurisdictions in the UK and in ROI, but though case studies exist, a comparable calculation of the benefits of the historic environment in real terms to NI's health, wellbeing and quality of life does not yet exist, though there have been a number of small scale projects which point to the potential of heritage as 'preventative medicine – for example 'Heritage4Health'²²³ demonstrates that heritage participation fosters both hedonic (happiness-based) and eudaimonic (meaning-based) wellbeing, contributing to:

²¹⁸ [Travel Survey \(TSNI\) | Department for Infrastructure](#)

²¹⁹ [third UK Climate Change Risk Assessment](#)

²²⁰ [Listed Buildings Survey](#)

²²¹ [Scheduled Historic Monuments Survey](#)

²²² [Listed Buildings Survey](#); [Scheduled Historic Monuments Survey](#)

²²³ [Heritage 4 Health - NI Environment Link](#)

- Psychological and Mental Health Benefits – Reduced stress, anxiety, and depression through immersive engagement with heritage sites, cultural landscapes, and community history.
- Social Wellbeing and Community Cohesion – Strengthened social bonds, intergenerational exchange, and increased civic participation, particularly among marginalized and vulnerable groups.
- Cultural Identity and Ontological Security – A sense of continuity and stability in a rapidly changing world, particularly in areas with contested histories or shifting demographics.
- Physical Wellbeing – Increased outdoor activity, mobility, and physical engagement through interaction with heritage-rich landscapes and green spaces.
- Economic and Regenerative Benefits – Heritage-led regeneration projects contribute to place-making and sustainable tourism, fostering economic prosperity alongside social wellbeing.

However, despite this growing evidence base, consideration of the role played by heritage is often excluded from formal public health and social wellbeing policies, leaving its potential impact underutilised and undervalued.

- Historic England report ‘Evidence Enquiry for Wellbeing and Heritage’²²⁴
- For example, Historic Environment Scotland’s ‘Heritage Places, Breathing Spaces’ campaign has been launched to boost wellbeing through connection to heritage. Laura Macdonald, a public health researcher specialising in place-based health inequalities at the University of Glasgow, worked with HES in 2023 to lead research revealing the important links between heritage and mental wellbeing. It comes after a recent HES survey* found 60% of people reported improved wellbeing because of visiting a HES site, and 74% of people felt a sense of connection to the sites after visiting.²²⁵²²⁶
- In (NISRA)’s annual Continuous Household Survey 2024-25²²⁷ in 2024/25, 64% of adults in Northern Ireland had visited a place of historic interest, an increase on the 2022/23 figure of 59% though the same as in 2023/24.

In the same year:

- There was no difference in the proportions of men and women who had visited a place of historic interest within the previous year (both 64%).

²²⁴ [Evidence Enquiry for Wellbeing and Heritage](#)

²²⁵ [New campaign seeks to boost wellbeing through connection to heritage](#)

²²⁶ [University of Glasgow - Schools - School of Health & Wellbeing - Research - MRC/CSO Social and Public Health Sciences Unit - Sharing our evidence - Improving Health Blog - Discovering heritage in your local neighbourhood](#)

²²⁷ [Experience of culture, arts and heritage by adults in Northern Ireland](#)

- Adults with a disability were found to be less likely to have visited a place of historic interest than those without a disability (56% and 67% respectively).
- Analysis by deprivation level showed that adults living in the least deprived area were more likely to have visited a place of historic interest than those living in the most deprived areas (77% and 51% respectively). In addition, those living in urban areas were more likely to have visited a place of historic interest than those living in a rural area (65% and 62% respectively).
- A higher proportion of adults from the Protestant community had visited a place of historic interest within the previous year (70%) than those from the Catholic community (57%).²²⁸
- Adults with dependants were more likely to have visited a place of historic interest (69%) compared to adults who do not have dependants (60%).
- While there was no difference in the proportions of males and females who had visited a place of historic interest within the previous year (64% and 65% respectively), there was a difference when analysed by age. The proportion of adults visiting a place of historic interest increased from those aged 16-24 to those aged 35-44 before dropping for adults aged 55 and over.
- There is currently a lack of social value/capital research directly relating to the historic environment and there are currently no directly measurable metrics to monitor change/ impact which are specific to NI's circumstances.
- There are no figures available on the number of heritage volunteers in Northern Ireland.
- Some figures are available to report on the number of 'openers' each year in the annual European Heritage Open Days events in NI, however overall NI figures are not collated currently, and don't reflect the large number of heritage activities and events which take place each year across a diverse range of organisations – both public and private.

²²⁸ *'using cultural assets to bring people together for therapeutic or social purpose'*

The 'Together: Building a United Community' (T:BUC) Strategy, reflects the NI Executive's commitment to improving community relations in Northern Ireland and continuing the journey towards a more united and shared society. The strategy outlines how government, community and individuals will work together to build a united community via a range of initiatives.

6.3.2 Population and Human Health - Environmental problems

- There is sufficient data to know that heritage assets have not been equally accessed by people across ability, religious and socio-economic profiles.
- There is insufficient statistical data to provide a complete overview of who does and does not have access to heritage (paid or free):
 - There is currently no statistical data available relating to racial group status and access or attitudes to the historic environment in NI.
 - There is currently no statistical data available relating to sexual orientation and access or attitudes to the historic environment in NI.
 - There is currently no statistical data available relating to political opinion and access or attitudes to the historic environment in NI.
 - European Heritage Open Days²²⁹ a free event which take place every September in Northern Ireland is the most widely celebrated cultural event shared by the people of Europe, offering free access to historic places over one weekend. There is no profiled data available for who attends this event, despite numbers being in the tens of thousands.
- NISRA data/evidence tells us that the historic environment is not visited/accessed equally across society. These figures represent access to heritage places – but there are no statistics which capture engagement with heritage activity in Northern Ireland – heritage related activity is therefore largely invisible to the sector and to other sectors like education and tourism.
- The non-monetary opportunities and benefits of owning, caring for, living amongst and using heritage assets are not fully understood in a Northern Ireland context i.e. its positive impacts on social value, quality of life, health, education, identity and pride in place.
- Funding for heritage assets has declined steeply in recent years²³⁰, leading to closures, for example in State Care sites. Of the 167 well known State Care buildings like Carrickfergus Castle and Dunluce Castle, nearly one fifth are in need of maintenance.
- Heritage projects are often perceived as ‘niche’ and a ‘nice to have’ – their potential is not recognised or fully understood in NI.
- This is exacerbated by the view that heritage is ‘elitist’ and ‘difficult’.
- This issue is accelerating due to a further legacy of neglect / lack of maintenance undermining the value of heritage buildings among society.
- Dilapidation is not neutral, it can have a negative effect on people quality of life and life chances. Most HARNI as well as most HARNI saves are in areas of deprivation (UAH).

²²⁹ [European Heritage Open Days | Department for Communities](#)

²³⁰ [Investing In Creative Delivery](#)

6.4 Part 3 – Population and Human Health – HE Policy Impact

SEA topic	SEA Objective
Population and Human Health	• create conditions to improve health and reduce health inequalities • promote healthy living • protect and enhance human health • reduce and prevent crime, reduce fear of crime • decrease noise and vibration • increase opportunities for indoor recreation and exercise

6.4.1 Potential impact of HE Policy on People

- Implementation of HE Policy is unlikely to have significant negative effects on People in Northern Ireland.
- However, **visiting and engaging with the historic environment improves physical and mental wellbeing**, and can improve community cohesion – it has the potential to enrich people’s lives – and have a significant positive impact on people.
- HE Policy is very relevant to most people in NI (as shown above) and matters to improve the historic and wider environment are relevant to a wide part of the population – changes therefore can have a **significant positive impact on addressing people’s concerns**; the **historic environment is a successful and animated engagement tool between people and their living, working and leisure environments**
- **Heritage sites are a means of access to the countryside and coast**; they bring wider benefits such as **tourism and volunteering**; access to heritage is often the lens through which people experience **nature and heritage together**.
- Activities centred around the historic environment and heritage sites can contribute to tackling inequality and healing through heritage
- HE Policy is likely to have positive effects for population and human health through support for continued access to cultural sites including those State Care sites and structures in the care of the Department, within the NI Government Estate and activities relating to further interpretation, use, enjoyment and understanding.
- Understanding through learning, **enjoyment and celebration of heritage can lead to an improved sense of value**, in return creating **increased desire for protection**.

- **Community involvement in decisions affecting their places and spaces can lead to better and longer term, sustainable uses for heritage assets, contributing to thriving communities.**
- A decline or improvement in condition of the historic environment can have an impact on people through a negative or positive impact on the **quality of their living or working environment**
- HE Policy to re-use buildings responds directly and visibly to people's **desire to reduce waste.**
- HE policy which responds to energy consumption by providing advice on maintaining and correctly adapting heritage assets to consume less energy directly responds to this desire and need to **reduce energy consumption fairly** for owners of heritage assets.
- Recommending best practice in managing heritage assets can open them up for **access to a wider population**, with potentially few physical changes needed. HE Policy will support welcoming places for a much broader range of people – across all backgrounds, age groups and abilities.
- HE policy can support **stronger links and more equal access across rural and urban areas to heritage assets.**
- Open space strategies and outdoor recreation plans have been drawn up for a number of regional areas including local authorities and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). **Strong partnerships** already exist could be built upon **which marry intangible and tangible heritage** through projects by for example the Rural Community Network or Local Landscape Partnerships.
- HE Policy can help to **collate evidence** of the relationship between heritage assets and their protected, often open, outdoor settings or access which often involves walking and being in the outdoors which **contributes to wellbeing.**
- HE Policy offers the potential to **work in partnership with other policies** – like the NI Architecture and Built Environment policy and the Environmental Improvement Plan as well as strategies within the Department of Health to emphasise the relationship between quality places and wellbeing.

6.4.2 Potential Negative Effects and Mitigation

- **Potential effect:** HE Policy will support adaptation for energy efficiency. This brings with it the risk of maladaptation (for example due to incorrect specification for retrofit causing material harm) which can have a detrimental effect on human health – such as poor ventilation causing black mould.
- **Mitigation:** HE Policy which supports best practice and leadership, guidance and research, and partnerships with other parts of the UK and Ireland to understand and adapt to climate change impacts and low carbon living with guidance and good practice flowing from HE Policy will mitigate against this risk.

6.4.3 Likely Impact without HE Policy:

- Without HE Policy, opportunities to use the historic environment as a resource for wellbeing, including for example ‘social prescribing’ may be lost.
- Without HE Policy, the opportunity to conserve, protect or enhance the historic environment to improve or celebrate identity for places or landscapes may be lost – at a cost to people
- Without investment in the historic environment, including State Care monuments, it will continue to decline; this negative effect on people’s living environments and communities can put increased strain on resources in other areas such as health, education and lack of employment – a potential resource is wasted
- Without HE Policy, the opportunity to build wealth in communities and accommodate shared, community spaces through for example the Community Asset Transfer process may be lost
- Without HE Policy, the risk of bad practice could have a detrimental effect on human health through poor understanding and unsuitable specification.

6.5 Part 4 - Suggested HE Policy Aims – People

6.5.1 Policy Aim 7: Exploring the potential for quality historic places to support wellbeing, and quality of life

Alternatives:	• Do-nothing/Business as Usual – there have been a number of small scale projects which point to the potential of heritage as ‘preventative medicine – for example ‘Heritage4Health’; a small number of internal studies have been carried out to gather qualitative data from visits to State Care monuments about the positive impacts on well-being and confidence for example, both for younger and older people. However, currently there are missing links between this information and health provision. To use research to scale this potential up and make connections to the Department of Health and throughout communities into community wellbeing has the potential for much greater benefits than to retain the status quo.
Selection:	Exploring the potential for quality historic places to support wellbeing, and quality of life • <i>‘There is now strong evidence that the environments in which people live, grow and work affect their mental health ...a good environment can bring positive benefits to mental health.’²³¹</i> • Living in, caring for and enjoying the historic environment is a key contributor to wellbeing²³², community and social cohesion, good relations, potential employment and better life chances. • Evidence²³³ elsewhere tells us what potential for wellbeing access to historic environments and heritage activity has for people in NI. An HE Policy aim which focuses on health would support work with both custodians and the health sector to understand how more could be done to realise this potential locally²³⁴; <i>Understanding the monetary value of the health and wellbeing impacts of culture and heritage enhances government’s ability to make informed decisions about resource allocation across all parts of the public realm.</i>²³⁵ • Evidence also points to our health being a product of people having pride of place and community cohesion in quality environments: urban, rural and natural. • HE Policy Aims to support peace and cohesion can also contribute to realising this aim to benefit people’s health.

²³¹ [Mental Health in Northern Ireland Fundamental Facts 2023 | Mental Health Champion Northern Ireland](#)

[Mental Health in MHF Northern Ireland Fundamental Facts 2023.pdf](#);

²³² British Medical Journal - [Is spatial exposure to heritage associated with visits to heritage and to mental health? A cross-sectional study using data from the UK Household Longitudinal Study \(UKHLS\) - PubMed](#)

²³³ [Wellbeing and Historic Environment: Why Bother? | Historic England](#)

²³⁴ [Social Prescribing Toolkit - NI Environment Link](#)

²³⁵ [CULTURE AND HERITAGE CAPITAL: MONETISING THE IMPACT OF CULTURE AND HERITAGE ON HEALTH AND WELLBEING](#)

Potential for Monitoring: HEADLINE METRICS	HEALTHIER LIVES % of adults and young people in Northern Ireland who have visited a place of historic interest (by age) (NISRA)		
Potential for Monitoring: SUPPORTING METRICS	• % of adults with a disability to have visited a place of historic interest within the previous year (NISRA) • % of men and women who had visited a place of historic interest within the previous year (NISRA) • % adults with dependants to have visited a place of historic interest (NISRA) • New Stat - There is currently no statistical data available relating to racial group status and the historic environment • New Stat - There is currently no statistical data available relating to sexual orientation and the historic environment • Number of visits by schools to State Care Monuments as an annual figure (Young people survey?) • Number of visitors total to State Care sites • Number of visits by Level 3 students (UU, QUB, FHE) to HERONI • Access to HERONI, NMNI, PRONI • New Stat - Stat % HERoNI records and artefacts accessible to public – physically, digitally • Number of contacts with HERoNI (queries/visits) and HED Queries		
Effects on SEA Objectives:	Material Assets	++	HE Policy enhances recognition and use of historic places, supporting high-quality, well-maintained assets and spaces.
	Landscape	++	HE Policy strengthens appreciation and protection of landscape character, distinctiveness and scenic value.
	Population / Health	++	HE Policy improves wellbeing through greater access, understanding and community involvement in caring for historic places.
	Climatic Factors	+	HE Policy encourages awareness of environmental conditions and supports adaptive, climate-positive behaviour
	Biodiversity, Flora, Fauna	+	HE Policy fosters appreciation of natural places, creating shared benefits for habitats and species.
	Air, Soil and Water	?	Increased access may raise visitor traffic; impacts are uncertain but can be mitigated through planning controls (e.g. SPPS).
	Cultural Heritage	++	Exploring the potential for quality historic places to support wellbeing has a highly positive effect on cultural heritage by strengthening recognition that caring for good places enhances wellbeing, increasing public desire to safeguard both tangible and intangible heritage.

6.5.2 Policy Aim 8: Evolving our shared understanding through access to research, surveys, records, artefacts and archives

Alternatives:	• Do Nothing : This option misses the opportunity to place government in a leadership role in helping communities access information, archives, artefacts and advice about their heritage assets. It offers no mechanism for coordinated or improved information management and does not meet the UK's obligations under international conventions such as the Valetta Convention. • Rely on the HCC Programme Museums Policy: While Museums Policy could consider artefact storage, this is linked to archaeological licensing managed by HED, and the Minister for Communities remains the statutory Keeper of the Records. Outsourcing to an ALB could complicate rather than improve access. This option also fails to meet the wider need to maintain up-to-date records, surveys and lists of buildings and monuments. • Transfer designation powers to local councils: Moving responsibility for listing to councils is not viable. Statutory listing powers lie with the Department for Communities, and no council has developed local lists. Councils currently lack the resources and expertise required, and this option would require legislative change, potentially without proof of improving outcomes.
Selection:	Evolving our shared understanding through access to research, surveys, records, artefacts and archives • A joined-up, long-term approach is needed to ensure information, records and knowledge about the historic environment are connected, accessible and directed to the point of need. • <i>'Community-based heritage conservation refers to the increasingly popular activity of coming together with members of the community to research local historical 'assets'. These could be associated with events, stories or moments linked with local places, including political movements, past professions, or local historical figures, as well as physical places themselves, such as walking trails, and cemeteries. It implicitly involves developing a closer relationship with one's local area and is potentially open to everyone, regardless of locality. Sometimes it involves 'preserving' an asset from harm – that is harm to its significance, not simply its fabric. It also typically involves the creation of cultural 'products' to conserve such heritage such as voice recordings of oral histories, poster exhibitions, heritage trails maps, books and murals.'</i>²³⁶ A joined up policy within the HCC Programme can encourage this connection to intangible heritage. • The by-product of being informed about our historic environment is good decision making²³⁷. In many cases, it's only when people enjoy learning what is distinct and relevant about their own place that they begin to consider its heritage

²³⁶ [Heritage, health and place: The legacies of local community-based heritage conservation on social wellbeing - ScienceDirect](#)

²³⁷ [Managing Change in World heritage Sites in Wales](#)

	value. Usually then, they also want to look after it²³⁸ - HE Policy can support this by promoting initiatives that improve public understanding and encourage stewardship • HE Policy can build high-level partnerships, remove barriers to advice, and ensure that information and guidance about heritage is easily accessible to all users—supporting better decision-making and empowering communities to care for their assets. • HE Policy can set out a long-term plan for recording, updating and making heritage information and archives available equitably and appropriately. • The HCC Programme offers opportunities to align Museum, Culture and Archive Policies with the Historic Environment, ensuring a coordinated approach to knowledge, access and interpretation.		
Potential for Monitoring: HEADLINE METRICS	BRIGHTER FUTURES - New Stat - % HERoNI, NMNI, PRONI records and artefacts accessible to public – physically, digitally		
Potential for Monitoring: SUPPORTING METRICS	• Existing Stat..Total number of Historic Buildings recorded (undesigned) • Existing Stat..Total number of Historic Monuments recorded (undesigned) • Existing Stat..Total number of Industrial heritage sites recorded (undesigned) • Existing Stat..Total number of Defence Heritage sites recorded • New Stat - Number of Thatch and TUT • New Stat - Number of vernacular records • Existing Stat - Extent of NI surveyed for listing as % of NI completed • Existing Stat - Numbers of Arch excavation Reports in HERoNI • Existing Stat - Amount spent on Research – Through the Historic Environment Fund (HEF)		
Effects on SEA Objectives:	Material Assets	++	Improved access to information, research and records supports better interpretation, care and management of assets, helping to reverse decline in their condition.
	Landscapes / Seascapes	++	Greater understanding of the historic environment strengthens protection of landscape and seascape character, supporting distinctiveness and scenic value.
	Population / Health	+	Helping communities understand their own places enhances pride, wellbeing and life chances through stronger local identity and informed engagement.
	Climatic Factors	+	Research, innovation and monitoring improve understanding of climate impacts on heritage, contributing positively to adaptation and resilience.

²³⁸ [English Heritage Strategy 2005-2010](#)

	Biodiversity, Flora, Fauna	+	Increased knowledge of the relationship between heritage and natural systems supports better stewardship of habitats and biodiversity.
	Air, Soil and Water	0	Increased access to knowledge is unlikely to have a significant direct effect on air, soil or water.
	Cultural Heritage	++	Better identification, research and understanding of heritage assets strengthens their protection and enhances people's desire to value and care for them – a virtuous circle.

6.5.3 Policy Aim 9: Reaching out: supporting heritage education and activity for inspiration, learning and enjoyment

Alternatives:	• Do-nothing/Business as Usual – there are several non-profit/charitable/voluntary heritage organisations such as the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Architectural Heritage Fund, National Churches Trust and Ulster Architectural Heritage and the Rural Community Network who run fixed term projects with elements of heritage activity tied to community and capital projects, supporting diversity and inclusivity. These rely on short-term resources/funding. Whilst successful, they sit in isolation and are not part of an overall high-level, targeted, measurable and joined up strategy to widen access to heritage activity in NI.
Selection:	Reaching out: supporting heritage activity for inspiration, learning and enjoyment • It is unrealistic to think that a short-term plan could have the desired impact needed to give equal access to heritage activity to everyone in Northern Ireland. • An overarching HE Policy which supports but also includes goals around heritage activity, inclusion and diversity activity over a long-term, 10-year period should have long term, cumulative impact on access to heritage activity across ability, socio economic profiles and ethnic/religious backgrounds, building up access over time and with synergies across education and community heritage aims; as a high level priority across the heritage sector. • Taking a long-term view offers opportunity to be more wholistic, reaching out to people who don't normally get involved, monitoring activity using metrics and setting targets. • Synergies are possible with a higher level NI Government Policy, for example HE Policy aims to use heritage assets as a could mean that heritage volunteering and experiences could contribute to wellbeing and health, as well as tourism and skills for the future. • Long-term HE Policy can also capitalise on the trend towards heritage activity which is growing through the next generation – in 2022 70% of young people had engaged with heritage²³⁹. • HE Policy can embed climate literacy in heritage interpretation, education, and outreach—using heritage to tell the story of climate change and resilience. • HE Policy could support the actions as identified in Archaeology 2030 engagement and Outreach working group
Potential for Monitoring:	BRIGHTER FUTURES - % of adults and young people in Northern Ireland who have visited a place of historic interest (by age)

²³⁹ [Experience of culture, arts and heritage by young people in Northern Ireland 2022 | Department for Communities](#)

HEADLINE METRICS	There is potential for this aim be amalgamated with Supporting inclusive and diverse access to historic places for everyone, Emphasising the contribution of our historic places to peace - cultural identity, community cohesion, good relations and healing through heritage.		
Potential for Monitoring: SUPPORTING METRICS	% of adults with a disability to have visited a place of historic interest within the previous year (NISRA) % of men and women who had visited a place of historic interest within the previous year (NISRA) % adults with dependants to have visited a place of historic interest (NISRA) - New Stat - There is currently no statistical data available relating to racial group status and the historic environment - New Stat - There is currently no statistical data available relating to sexual orientation and the historic environment. - Number of visits by schools to State Care Monuments as an annual figure (Young people survey?) - Number of visitors total to State Care sites - Number of visits by Level 3 students (UU, QUB, FHE) to HERONI - Access to HERONI, NMNI, PRONI - New Stat - Stat % HERoNI records and artefacts accessible to public – physically, digitally - Number of contacts with HERoNI (queries/visits) and HED Queries		
Effects on SEA Objectives:	Material Assets	++	Broadening participation in heritage activity brings assets back into everyday use and awareness, supporting their long-term care and value.
	Landscape	++	Heritage activity strengthens appreciation of landscape character and distinctiveness, creating positive synergies between heritage and landscape.
	Population / Health	++	Inclusive heritage activity enhances wellbeing, learning and life chances.
	Climatic Factors	+	Increased awareness of conservation and re-use supports positive climate behaviours.
	Biodiversity, Flora, Fauna	+	Heritage activity can deepen appreciation of natural spaces, encouraging stewardship of green areas and protected sites.
	Air, Water and Soil	?	Increased access may raise visitor traffic, though impacts are uncertain and can be managed through planning controls (e.g. SPPS)
	Cultural Heritage	++	Embedding diverse heritage activity in everyday life strengthens understanding, safeguarding and long-term protection of both tangible and intangible heritage.

6.5.4 Policy Aim 10: Supporting inclusive and diverse access to historic places for everyone

Alternatives:	• Do-nothing/Business as Usual – there are several small- and large-scale historic locations, monuments, buildings and places in Northern Ireland such as Conservation Areas, Cultural Landscapes, Council owned historic parks and gardens, etc. which provide free access to heritage. These sit in isolation and are not part of an overall high-level, targeted, measurable and joined up strategy to widen access to heritage in NI. A joined up overview could also maximise the links between natural and man-made heritage. • Focus on State Care access to heritage - DfC owns 167 State care monuments, however one fifth are in need of maintenance and several are closed. A State Care Investment Plan has been approved which could maximise the condition, access and use of these buildings but this plan has not yet been funded. Funding to access these sites eg. providing buses for schools could contribute to improving access. However, if a successful policy was put in place, people wouldn't need to travel to a State Care site to appreciate and enjoy heritage. Heritage assets in good condition all over Northern Ireland would have a wider impact across broader groups of people, contributing to free enjoyment of heritage including listed buildings, as part of the everyday.
Selection:	Policy Aim: Supporting inclusive and diverse access to historic places for everyone • The historic environment should be accessible and relevant to everyone who lives and visits NI, whatever their socio-economic background, race, religion, age, sexuality, gender, disability, or health. Like access to Heritage Activity, HE Policy could action a long-term and high-level policy view to tackle unequal access to historic places but also synergise with care of heritage assets and community access , access to green spaces and ownership of heritage assets in local communities – buildings and monuments which are already found everywhere across Northern Ireland, for example in areas of deprivation. • Having been created by a diverse history, varied communities have shaped our culture and traditions; different historical influences have left their mark. This wide sphere of influence makes historic places relatable to a broad group of people, who should all have access to it. • The historic environment has the potential to function as a platform from which to celebrate diversity, instill pride and strengthen connections between the past, present and future, including the heritage of minority communities. HE Policy can contain high-level actions to realise this ambition.
Potential for Monitoring: HEADLINE METRICS	HEALTHIER LIVES - % of adults and young people in Northern Ireland who have visited a place of historic interest (by equality metrics (NISRA))

Potential for Monitoring: SUPPORTING METRICS	• % of adults with a disability to have visited a place of historic interest within the previous year (NISRA) • % of men and women who had visited a place of historic interest within the previous year (NISRA) • % adults with dependants to have visited a place of historic interest (NISRA) • New Stat..There is currently no statistical data available relating to racial group status and the historic environment • New Stat..There is currently no statistical data available relating to sexual orientation and the historic environment • Number of visits by schools to State Care Monuments as an annual figure (Young people survey?) • Number of visitors total to State Care sites • Number of visits by Level 3 students (UU, QUB, FHE) to HERONI • Access to HERONI, NMNI, PRONI • New Stat - Stat % HERoNI records and artefacts accessible to public – physically, digitally • Number of contacts with HERoNI (queries/visits) and HED Queries		
Effects on SEA Objectives:	Material Assets	++	Increased and more diverse access encourages investment and reuse of heritage assets, supporting high-quality places and long-term care.
	Landscape	++	Wider access strengthens appreciation of landscape character and distinctiveness, creating positive synergies between heritage and landscape.
	Population / Health	++	Inclusive access to historic places improves wellbeing, learning and life chances.
	Climatic Factors	+	Greater engagement promotes conservation and reuse behaviours that support climate mitigation.
	Biodiversity, Flora, Fauna	+	Increased appreciation of natural places encourages stewardship of habitats and green spaces.
	Air, Water and Soil	?	More visitors may increase travel-related impacts, though these can be managed through planning controls (e.g. SPPS).
	Cultural Heritage	++	Embedding heritage in everyday experience strengthens understanding and long-term safeguarding of both tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

6.5.5 Policy Aim 11: Partnering with government departments, public bodies, and agencies, as well as asset owners, landowners and volunteers, to use the historic environment creatively

Existing Baseline:

- In the Listed Building Owners' Survey¹, when asked to specify the advantage of owning a listed building, out of the 52% who said that there are advantages, 95% said that it makes them feel part of history/heritage. The second most cited advantage was sense of pride, with 71% of respondents stating it.
- NISRA's survey tells us that 81% of adults in NI engaged in the arts in 2024/25²⁴⁰
- In 2024/25 42% of adults in NI visited a museum or science centre (26% visited a National Museum)
- IN 2024/25 23% used the public library service
- The NI Architecture and Built Environment Policy describes links between designing good places and using the Historic Environment; this policy is currently being re-drafted.

Environmental Problems:

- Links between Historic Environment and Landscape Policy were weakened when HED was separated from NIEA in 2014 and moved to a different department in 2015.
- There are no figures published for numbers of visitors to HERoNI or number of online accesses to information which can be related to PRoNI or museums/archive access.
- There is no strategy at present to join up for example thematic information like genealogy which touches on buildings, graveyards and public records with tourism, often of mutual interest
- There is no overarching strategy (though one is under development as part of HCC) to connect the Arts to Built heritage – for example through storytelling, music and visual arts. Projects or events which do this are most effective in rural areas according to the Rural Community Network.
- There is no promotion of information in Historic Environment Archives to local government, schools or businesses despite this being a free service

²⁴⁰ [Experience of culture, arts and heritage by adults in Northern Ireland](#)

- There is no formal relationship between the Arts Council, Libraries NI, Museums Council and the Historic Buildings or Monuments Councils in NI ;there is no formal relationship between these councils and local councils or the Strategic Investment Board (SIB)

Alternatives:	• Do-nothing/Business as Usual – during the Covid-19 emergency, it was recognized that a lack of policy around the Arts and Historic Environment made decision-making a challenge. ‘Do-nothing’ would not address this challenge.
Selection:	• Pride in place is a fundamental outcome of looking after, understanding and celebrating heritage – this has a virtuous circular effect in that this means there is more desire to look after heritage – having longer-term, cumulative benefit for quality of places: the Listed Building Owners’ survey told us that when people value their assets, this correlates with looking after them. Activity to help people understand and enjoy their assets can have a strong impact on condition – having a wider impact on places, landscapes and seascapes. • On 3 July 2024 Minister Lyons announced a new approach to provide, for the first time, a comprehensive collection of culture-related policies in Northern Ireland. Under the heading of “Heritage, Culture and Creativity”, this programme will address actions to conserve, protect and promote our cultural heritage and historic environment; and to encourage, support and develop the curiosity, active engagement and creativity it helps to inspire. • A high-level central government HE Policy can best support people to feel pride of place. Heritage places - towns, landscapes, seascapes, places like Dunluce, Carrickfergus Castle and Devenish - are a barometer of collective pride in place. They represent an essential value that we have in ourselves. This is why they are a big part of how visitors understand and experience Northern Ireland. We are representing ourselves through the development and showcasing of these places. We are representing ourselves through equal and free access to them. • A high-level central government HE Policy can best support people to enjoy and understand our historic environment more through links in Policy to architecture and the built environment, arts, museums libraries Policies, and the personal culture, traditions and stories associated with places in NI through local councils and networks. • Creative tools particularly inspire children and young people, awakening their interest and involvement in their shared places and shared history, contributing to wider PfG aims. For example – ‘<i>Buildings themselves are only part of the story. The way that industrial heritage connects to local pride is also about local story-telling and family history and folklore.</i>’²⁴¹; connecting with the work that their children’s grandparents and great grandparents did. Using an existing asset – heritage and historic archives – to also promote or locate arts venues, libraries and museums and their activity creates mutual benefit, promoting access to more than one positive for people. ‘<i>..history feeds into the culture and the culture feeds into identity.</i>’²⁴²

²⁴¹ [Heritage and Civic Pride: Voices From Levelling Up Country | Historic England](#)

²⁴² [Heritage and Civic Pride: Voices From Levelling Up Country | Historic England](#)

	To further this aim, HE Policy could make the most of the potential NI's historic environment offers because it can spark creativity and imagination – for example as locations for artists' or writers' retreats, and also be a profitable asset, for example for film sets.		
Potential for Monitoring: HEADLINE METRICS	CULTURAL & CREATIVE COLLABORATION New Stat - Number of creative businesses in NI based in Conservation areas and listed buildings New Stat - Number of Heritage Skills, Conservation and Adaptation awards in NI		
Potential for Monitoring: SUPPORTING METRICS	- LB and Monuments Owners' Forum and survey feedback - Creating networks - Numbers of Heritage organisations - Heritage Volunteers – numbers and type £ annual revival funding (HEF) £ annual Arts council funding for heritage events £ annual funding by NMNI for heritage events £ generated by Screen NI for films set in NI (heritage)		
Effects on SEA Objectives:	Material Assets	++	Partnerships that build pride of place strongly support protection, maintenance, reuse and enhancement of historic assets.
	Landscape	++	Increased pride and awareness reinforces protection, character, distinctiveness and scenic quality of landscapes.
	Population / Health	++	Inspires learning, enjoyment and stronger connection to places, improving physical and mental wellbeing.
	Climatic Factors	+	Pride-based care supports maintenance and retention of assets and encourages understanding of climate relationships.
	Biodiversity, Flora, Fauna	+	Enhances appreciation of natural heritage and its links with historic places, supporting positive stewardship.
	Air, Water and Soil	?	Potential for increased visitor traffic; effects uncertain but manageable through planning controls (e.g. SPPS).
	Cultural Heritage	++	Strongly supports safeguarding, appreciation and restoration of heritage, reinforcing cultural identity and pride.

7 Peace

7.1 Part 1- Peace – Relationship with other plans, programmes and strategies

SEA Topic - Population / Health - Peace				
Protection				
Cultural Heritage in Northern Ireland is treated as a human rights issue, ensuring that communities' identities, traditions and expressions are respected and safeguarded. These rights are protected through: • European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR Article 10)²⁴³ • The Good Friday (Belfast) Agreement²⁴⁴				
International Convention, declaration or charter	Legislative basis, environmental objectives or requirements of the plan or programme	How objectives and requirements of other plans or programmes might be taken on board in Historic Environment Policy (HE Policy) or how HE Policy might impact other plans, policies or programmes	Impacts on HE Policy	HE Policy may Impact outcomes
The Paris Convention (1954)	This convention recommends best practice and doctrine. Also known as the Paris Convention of 1954, its main relevant obligations are: • Development of the national contribution to the common cultural heritage of Europe (article 1) • Safeguarding objects of European cultural value placed under government control (article 5)	Historic Environment Policy will support and enhance the objectives of this Charter in Northern Ireland, with aims to safeguard heritage, and promote equal and common access to heritage, for people's benefit.	✓	

²⁴³ [European Convention on Human Rights](#)

²⁴⁴ [The Belfast Agreement - GOV.UK](#)

	Ensuring reasonable access to such objects (article 5) The UK has been a signatory of the Paris Convention since 1954.			
2003 UNESCO Convention on the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003)	This Convention, ratified by the UK in 2024 recognizes traditional craftsmanship, oral traditions and expressions, performing arts, social practices, rituals and festive events, knowledge and practices related to nature and the universe.	HE Policy will support this convention, including a commitment to an increased inventory of Northern Ireland's traditions, comprising practices inspired by diaspora communities, and to better safeguarding of the most at-risk traditions and crafts. The link between tangible and intangible heritage is self-evident; supporting activity which uses, celebrates and understands historic assets and places will support and enhance the objectives of this Convention to protect intangible cultural heritage, but also for people to interpret, enjoy and understand tangible heritage.	✓	
2017 ICOMOS Delhi Declaration on Heritage and Democracy	A doctrinal charter reflecting the commitment by ICOMOS to Heritage and Democracy as ingredients of a people-based approach to sustainable development. Heritage is a starting point for a meaningful and equitable future that secures and celebrates diversity, social engagement, equality and justice for all cultures. The charter outlines the 'duty to conserve the significance of the multicultural, multidimensional heritage resources we have inherited and hand them down to following generations. Engaging and training new generations in the understanding and protection of the inherited values of our living and shared heritage will sustain the plural legacies of the past'.	HE policy will support this declaration through the commitment to respect values, significance, authenticity in the management of heritage resources; providing guidance to inform practice in the education and management of heritage resources; heritage as a resource of all the people, by all the people, for all the people; increasing democratic community engagement; respecting the continuity of living heritages-safeguarding heritage resources between communities and cultures Through the work on heritage skills, recognition and support will be given to the people and communities who embody cultural knowledge and skills for the long term perpetuation of living heritage.	✓	

Other plan/programme or strategy	Legislative basis, environmental objectives or requirements of the plan or programme	How objectives and requirements of other plans or programmes might be taken on board in Historic Environment Policy (HE Policy) or how HE Policy might impact other plans, policies or programmes	Impacts on HE Policy	HE Policy may impact outcomes
Programme for Government (PfG) 2024-2027²⁴⁵ ‘Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most’	PfG includes a commitment to peace: <i>‘We will build on the successes of the past twenty-six years to make sure that our peace is meaningful and prosperous for everyone here. By focusing on People, Planet, and Prosperity, we will shape a fairer and more peaceful society.’</i>	Historic Environment Policy has the potential to shape environmental actions which support a peaceful future. For example, celebrating identity and pride whilst promoting and making available information about history and places which stretch back millennia to the present day. HE Policy will support preserving heritage assets which may be needed in the future to understand even the more recent past, such as remaining evidence of ‘the Troubles’.	✓	✓
About Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC)²⁴⁶	<i>‘The ‘Together: Building a United Community’ (T:BUC) Strategy, published on 23 May 2013, reflects the Executive’s commitment to improving community relations and continuing the journey towards a more united and shared society.’</i>	The T:BUC Strategy outlines how government, community and individuals are working to build a united community and achieve change against the following key priorities: • our children and young people • our shared community • our safe community • our cultural expression Each of the four key priorities also has a set of tangible and practical commitments. The Strategy is delivered through T:BUC funded programmes, which HE Policy will support – for example the ‘Urban Villages Programme’, the ‘Peace Plus Programme’ and good relations programmes. In particular, the strategy supports actions in contested spaces, and	✓	✓

²⁴⁵ [Programme for Government 2024-2027 ‘Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most’ | The Northern Ireland Executive](#)

²⁴⁶ [About Together: Building a United Community \(T:BUC\) | The Executive Office](#)

		options to develop shared space in a rural context. Historic buildings and spaces can provide neutral venues and spaces with shared senses of history and common ground which stretch beyond modern memory.		
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7.2 Part 2 – Peace - Environmental Characteristics

7.2.1 Peace - Existing Baseline

- *‘The benefits of social interaction, creative opportunities and sharing memories may contribute towards social cohesion through sharing experiences and developing new connections. This has significant potential for the historic environment, especially in community and place-based initiatives.’*²⁴⁷
- The relationship between the historic environment and social capital was demonstrated in a recent study by Mak et al (2023), which found that people living in places with greater historic built environment experience higher levels of personal relationships, social network support, and civic engagement.²⁴⁸ This research was not specific to Northern Ireland which has its own unique circumstances.

7.2.2 Peace - Environmental problems

- Northern Ireland’s ‘heritage’ is in some cases contested. There can be a reluctance to engage with some aspects of our historic environment because of those associations²⁴⁹. These circumstances are recognised but we are not currently widely using heritage or heritage activities to address them.
- The unique possibilities for NI’s historic environment to be used as a tool for peace, community cohesion, and good relations is shown in other places – but it has not yet been fully explored to its full potential.

²⁴⁷ [Wellbeing and Historic Environment: Why Bother? | Historic England](#)

²⁴⁸ [The Role of Heritage in Bringing People Together | Heritage Counts | Historic England](#)

²⁴⁹ ‘Conserving the past, protecting the peace’ Liam McQuillan - Heritage Under Pressure – Threats and Solutions – Oxbow Books (Editors Dawson, James and Nevell, Oxford, 2019)

7.3 Part 3 – Peace - Population and Human Health – HE Policy Impact

SEA topic	SEA Objective
Population and Human Health	• promote healthy living • protect and enhance human health • reduce and prevent crime, reduce fear of crime

7.3.1 Potential impact of HE Policy on Peace

- Implementation of HE Policy is unlikely to have significant negative effects on Peace in Northern Ireland.
- HE Policy could support a future where NI's **historic environment is strongly associated with building social connections**.
- The relationship between the historic environment and social capital was demonstrated in a recent study²⁵⁰ which found that **people living in places with greater historic built environment experience higher levels of personal relationships, social network support, and civic engagement**.²⁵¹ This is of particular resonance for a post-conflict society such as Northern Ireland, where communities can together explore shared heritage, contributing to **increased respect and community cohesion**.
- HE Policy can encourage people to create **shared, inclusive narratives**, emphasising common heritage and highlighting elements of local history that are **shared by all communities, such as natural beauty, cultural diversity and collective achievements**.
- The Historic Environment is a strong place to support the T:BUC²⁵² Strategy– for example the 'Urban Villages Programme', the 'Peace Plus Programme' and good relations programmes. HE Policy can support actions in contested spaces, and options to develop shared space in a rural context. Historic buildings and spaces can provide neutral venues and spaces with a shared sense of history and common ground which stretches beyond modern memory.

²⁵⁰ [Listed Buildings Survey; Scheduled Historic Monuments Survey](#)

²⁵¹ [The Role of Heritage in Bringing People Together | Heritage Counts | Historic England](#)

²⁵² [Together: Building a United Community \(T:BUC\) | The Executive Office](#)

7.3.2 Potential Negative Effects and Mitigation

- **Potential effect:** It is possible that preserving heritage associated with contested spaces can ‘bring up the past’, or lead people to feel that certain aspects are being spotlighted or celebrated.
- **Mitigation:** Recent projects such as those to provide records in PRONI for Mother and Baby and other institutions demonstrate that if carefully managed, records and tangible artefacts, buildings and spaces can be the first step in understanding and working through difficult historical events. Partnerships with TEO and others could ensure that contested spaces are also healing spaces.

7.3.3 Likely Impact without HE Policy

- The relics of the Troubles have been protected in limited locations such as the Maze Long Kesh site, but a wide-reaching comprehensive built environment record of ‘the Troubles’, which could be protected until it is needed, for education and good relations has not yet been carried out, meaning that opportunities have not yet been fully explored for protection and healing through heritage. Without HE Policy, this physical record is likely to be underused.

7.4 Part 3 - Suggested HE Policy Aims – Peace

7.4.1 Policy Aim 12: Emphasising the contribution of our historic places to peace - community cohesion, good relations and healing through heritage

Alternatives:	• Do-nothing/Business as Usual – Historic places aren’t always viewed the same way by everyone. Different people place more importance on different aspects of heritage that are personal to them. Some people connect to their heritage through traditions, music and language. Some place more emphasis on tangible structures; there are different definitions of ‘heritage’. Northern Ireland’s ‘heritage’ is in some cases contested. There can be a reluctance to engage with some aspects of our historic environment because of those associations²⁵³. These circumstances are recognised but we are not currently using heritage or heritage activities to address them. Some small scale projects show potential, like those by the Rural community Network however they are time and budget limited: <i>‘Most recently, we have been developing a community mentor programme, connecting communities up who ... we think could benefit from a community heritage mentor from a rural area. This mentor programme will allow communities to feel more connected, less isolated ... and for two rural areas to experience another communities’ place, story and people.’</i>²⁵⁴
Selection:	Policy Aim: Emphasising the contribution of our historic places to peace - cultural identity, community cohesion, good relations and healing through heritage. • To work towards this aim, HE Policy could support a future where NI’s historic environment is strongly associated with building social connections. • <i>‘Social capital is the glue that binds together communities otherwise at risk of coming unstuck.’</i>²⁵⁵ The Office for National Statistics (ONS) defines social capital as <i>“the extent and nature of our connections with others and the collective attitudes and behaviours between people that support a well-functioning, close-knit society”</i>²⁵⁶. • The relationship between the historic environment and social capital was demonstrated in a recent study²⁵⁷ which found that people living in places with greater historic built environment experience higher levels of personal relationships, social network support, and civic engagement.²⁵⁸ This is of particular resonance for a post-conflict

²⁵³ ‘Conserving the past, protecting the peace’ Liam McQuillan - Heritage Under Pressure – Threats and Solutions – Oxbow Books (Editors Dawson, James and Nevell, Oxford, 2019)

²⁵⁴ Emma McAleer, Rural Community Network

²⁵⁵ [Andy Haldane: Social capital is the glue that binds communities together | The National Lottery Community Fund](#)

²⁵⁶ [Social capital harmonised standard – Government Analysis Function \(civilservice.gov.uk\)](#)

²⁵⁷ [Listed Buildings Survey; Scheduled Historic Monuments Survey](#)

²⁵⁸ [The Role of Heritage in Bringing People Together | Heritage Counts | Historic England](#)

	society such as Northern Ireland, where communities can together explore shared heritage, contributing to increased respect and community cohesion. We will encourage people to create shared, inclusive narratives, emphasising our common heritage and highlighting elements of local history that are shared by all communities, such as natural beauty, cultural diversity and collective achievements. • The Historic Environment is a strong place to support the T:BUC Strategy– for example the ‘Urban Villages Programme’, the ‘Peace Plus Programme’ and good relations programmes. HE Policy can support actions in contested spaces, and options to develop shared space in a rural context. Historic buildings and spaces can provide neutral venues and spaces with a shared sense of history and common ground which stretches beyond modern memory. • HE Policy can support the suggestions in the for re-use/meanwhile use/re-visioning, exploring the potential for cheap / reduced rents for innovative uses- potentially marketing to the youth, culture and creative sectors with potential for good targeted outcomes relating to social value and peacebuilding through shared spaces for innovation		
Potential for Monitoring: HEADLINE METRICS	EQUAL SOCIETY • Religious belief – % of adults from the Protestant/Catholic community to visit a place of historic interest within the previous year. • New Stat - £ Contribution of NI Heritage Sector to Society – Source? Creation of a Universal Social Value tool		
Potential for Monitoring: SUPPORTING METRICS	• New Stat..There is currently no statistical data available relating to the public’s view on the historic environment in Northern Ireland – this should be developed as in other parts of UK²⁵⁹		
Effects on SEA Objectives:	Material Assets	+	Recognising heritage’s role in peace can increase public value and demand for high-quality, well-cared-for places and assets.
	Landscapes / Seascapes	+	Shared heritage narratives can support protection of landscape character, distinctiveness and scenic quality.
	Population / Health	++	Strong positive effects through improved access, sense of value, community participation, better environments, and enhanced wellbeing
	Climatic Factors	+	Community-driven reuse of heritage assets supports carbon savings and avoids demolition-led emissions.
	Biodiversity, Flora, Fauna	+	Shared appreciation of heritage and natural spaces can encourage mutually supportive stewardship.

²⁵⁹ [What’s Your Heritage? | Historic Environment Scotland | History](#)

	Air, Water and Soil	?	Increased access may raise traffic or visitor pressure, though manageable through existing planning controls (e.g. SPPS).
	Cultural Heritage	+	Greater recognition of heritage's peace-building value supports protection of tangible and intangible cultural assets.

8 Cultural Heritage

8.1 Part 1 – Cultural Heritage – Relationship with other plans, strategies and programmes

This section comes at the end of all the others, because as shown, **all of the SEA Topics have relevance for the Historic Environment** which falls most immediately under the SEA Topic '**Cultural Heritage**'.

The list of relevant plans, strategies and programmes listed below are **in addition to those under the headings of Places, Natural Places, Planet, and People above.**

SEA Topic - Cultural Heritage

Protection

Relevant legislation:

- **Planning Act (NI) 2011**
- **Planning Policy Statements (PPS – in particular PPS6, PPS16, PPS21).** It should be noted that the PPS's will be superseded by Local Development Plans when they are adopted.
- **Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects (Northern Ireland) Order 1995**
- **Protection of Military Remains Act 1986**
- **Protection of Wrecks Act, 1973**
- **Merchant Shipping Act 1995**
- **The Fisheries Act (Northern Ireland) 1966**
- **Treasure Act 1996**
- **UK Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009**
- **The Marine Act (NI) 2013**
- **The Climate Change Act 2022**
- **Dealing in Cultural Objects (offences) Act 2003**
- **The Finance Act 1976 (Conditional Exemption)**

International Convention, declaration or charter	Legislative basis, environmental objectives or requirements of the plan or programme	How objectives and requirements of other plans or programmes might be taken on board in Historic Environment Policy (HE Policy) or how HE Policy might impact other plans, policies or programmes	Impacts on HE Policy	HE Policy may impact outcomes
The Athens Charter for the Restoration of Historic Monuments (ICOMOS) (1931)	This Charter has no legal force but recommends best practice and doctrine. This was the first international agreement which placed responsibility on government to act in the care of the historic environment. Signatories agreed that it is essential that the principles guiding the preservation and restoration of ancient buildings should be agreed and be laid down on an international basis, with each country being responsible for applying the plan within the framework of its own culture and traditions.	Historic Environment Policy will support and enhance the objectives of this Charter in Northern Ireland, which set out the framework for protecting, conserving and enhancing the historic environment in the event of development and when under threat.	✓	
The Venice Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) (1964)²⁶⁰	This Charter has no legal force but recommends best practice and doctrine. It comprises a set of guidelines, drawn up in 1964 by a group of conservation professionals in Venice, that provides an international framework for the conservation and restoration of historic buildings, based on the principles of the Athens Charter.	Historic Environment Policy will support and enhance the strategic objectives of this Charter in Northern Ireland, focusing on standards and best practice for conservation and restoration of historic buildings, including the need for skilled people.	✓	
UNESCO World Heritage Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural²⁶¹	This convention is legally binding. The UK ratified this Convention in 1972. The most significant feature of the 1972 World Heritage Convention is that it links together in a single document the concepts of nature conservation and the preservation of cultural properties. The Convention recognizes the way in which people	Historic Environment Policy will support and enhance the strategic objectives of this Convention in Northern Ireland, focusing on communities, awareness and protection of world heritage sites. In Northern Ireland there are currently two world heritage sites – the Giant's Causeway (a natural site) and Gracehill village a part	✓	

²⁶⁰ https://openarchive.icomos.org/id/eprint/432/1/Monuments_and_Sites_1_Charters_Petzet.pdf

²⁶¹ [Cultural heritage | UNESCO UIS](#)

and Natural Heritage (1972) ²⁶²	interact with nature, and the fundamental need to preserve the balance between the two. The ‘five C’s’ are the strategic objectives adopted by the World Heritage committee in 2002 and 2007: • Credibility - Strengthen the Credibility of the World Heritage List, as a representative and geographically balanced testimony of cultural and natural properties of outstanding universal value; • Conservation - Ensure the effective Conservation of World Heritage properties; • Capacity-building - Promote the development of effective Capacity-building measures, including assistance for preparing the nomination of properties to the World Heritage List, for the understanding and implementation of the World Heritage Convention and related instruments; • Communication - Increase public awareness, involvement and support for World Heritage through communication; • Communities. - Enhance the role of communities in the implementation of the World Heritage Convention.	of the transnational Moravian Church Settlements , World Heritage Site. However, amplifying and making the most of the transboundary significance of NI heritage assets will be one of the aims of HE Policy.		
The Granada Convention (1985) for the Protection of	This convention is legally binding. The European Convention for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (revised) was originally signed by the UK in 1969	Historic Environment Policy will align with the Convention’s objective to protect archaeological heritage, but also to promote the wider understanding		

²⁶² [1972, Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage – ICOMOS CIVVIH](#)

the Archaeological Heritage of Europe (revised - The Valletta Convention on Protection of Archaeology - 1992) 263	but revised in Valetta in 1992. It reflects the nature of threats to archaeological heritage, from unauthorised excavations and major construction projects. The revised text makes the conservation and enhancement of the archaeological heritage one of the goals of urban and regional planning policies. Signatories (including the UK) promise to allow the input of expert archaeologists into the making of planning policies and planning decisions. The Protection of the Architectural Heritage, Granada (1985) (Article 14) requires measures for the identification, protection, restoration, maintenance, management and promotion of the architectural heritage and the supply of information between the State, the regional and local authorities, cultural institutions and associations, and the public. The Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (revised) Valetta (1992), It defines archaeological heritage and the signatories promise to make and maintain an inventory of such heritage and to legislate for its protection. The emphasis is on protection of sites for future study, the reporting of chance finds, the control of excavations and the use of metal detectors. Signatories (including the UK) also promise to allow the input of expert archaeologists into the making of planning policies and planning decisions	and appreciation of the historic environment, including public access and education to protect it through the valuing of archaeology, and the role that these material assets have in shaping places.		
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²⁶³ [Convention for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage of Europe \(revised\) \(Valletta, 1992\) - Culture and Cultural Heritage](#)

The Florence Charter 1982 (International Council on Monuments and Sites) requires responsible authorities to adopt appropriate measures for the identification, listing and protection of historic gardens	<i>An historic garden is an architectural and horticultural composition of interest to the public from the historical or artistic point of view... As such, it is to be considered as a monument. As a monument, the historic garden must be preserved in accordance with the spirit of the Venice Charter. However, since it is a living monument, its preservation must be governed by specific rules which are the subject of the [Florence] charter.</i>	Historic Environment Policy will support and enhance the strategic objectives of this Charter in Northern Ireland, reinforcing the protection of historic gardens as heritage assets – but also their contribution to wellbeing, place making and biodiversity.		
Other plan/programme or strategy	Legislative basis, environmental objectives or requirements of the plan or programme	How objectives and requirements of other plans or programmes might be taken on board in Historic Environment Policy (HE Policy) or how HE Policy might impact other plans, policies or programmes	Impacts on HE Policy	HE Policy may impact outcomes
Conservation Principles (DfC)²⁶⁴	The ‘Conservation Principles’ guidance sets out a best practice conservation framework for all aspects of decision making affecting NI’s historic environment. Part 1 ‘Conservation Principles’ Guidance for the sustainable management of the historic environment in Northern Ireland’ sets out the six key guiding conservation principles and explains how significance is central to conservation, how to assess it, and use it as a tool to manage change. Part 2 ‘Applying the Conservation Principles’ Guidance for the sustainable management of the historic	HE Policy and actions flowing from HE Policy will align with these key principles, helping to clarify and expand on how these principles can be applied to the historic environment in a policy context: Principle 1 - The historic environment is of value to us all Principle 2 - Everyone should be able to participate in sustaining the historic environment Principle 3 - Understanding the significance of heritage assets is vital	✓	✓

²⁶⁴ [Conservation Principles guidance | Department for Communities](#)

	environment in Northern Ireland’ sets out the different types of changes impacting a heritage asset. It explains how the conservation principles can guide decision making for each change, to achieve best conservation outcomes.	Principle 4 - Heritage assets shall be managed to sustain their significance Principle 5 - Decisions about change shall be reasonable, transparent and consistent Principle 6 - Documenting and learning from decisions is essential		
Archaeology 2030	Archaeology 2030: A strategic approach for Northern Ireland was launched in December 2020 and actively engages with the key issues and challenges that the archaeological sector in Northern Ireland faces. The strategy sets out a strategic approach and series of recommendations as to how we, as a society, develop our engagement with, and understanding of, our archaeology. The strategic objectives of Archaeology 2030 are: • Adopting Best Practice • Making Knowledge accessible • Sustaining the historic environment • Engaging and enriching peoples’ lives Developing learning and skills	Historic Environment Policy will align with and augment the Archaeology 2030 objectives which support the archaeology sector to better protect and use archaeological heritage for everyone’s benefit. HE Policy may influence future NI Archaeology Strategies to follow or flow from Archaeology 2030.	✓	✓
Draft Tourism Strategy for NI – 10-year plan – Department for Economy	The draft Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland: 10 Year Plan sets out a vision and mission for the growth of the tourism sector in Northern Ireland over the next decade. <i>‘It will be a key enabler of the 10x Economic Vision to help position the region internationally as an attractive place to visit, making our visitors feel welcome whilst at the same time helping to make the lives better of all our citizens. It will seek to deliver on the objectives</i>	Historic Environment Policy aims will support people and places to conserve, maintain, enhance, understand and enjoy their heritage assets, contributing to the Tourism Strategy vision. The Heritage, Culture and Creativity Strategy of which Historic Environment Policy is a component part is	✓	✓

	<i>of 10x by generating economic growth that is sustainable, inclusive and innovative.'</i> The Vision of the Strategy is to: <i>Establish Northern Ireland as a year-round world class destination which is renowned for its authentic experiences, landscape, heritage and culture and which benefits communities, the economy and the environment, with sustainability at its core.</i> The draft tourism strategy reflects the ambition to widen the appeal of sub-regional locations to visitors, to strengthen the domestic market, and to enrich the lives of residents all year round.	listed as a 'Key Strategy or Policy' within the Draft Tourism Plan.		
The Protocol for the Care of the Government's Historic Estate ²⁶⁵	The Protocol sets out what the NI Executive requires from all central government departments and agencies. Under the Protocol, Northern Ireland Government is obligated to setting a good example in the care of its historic estate and the Protocol standards are widely understood and accepted to be a benchmark of good conservation management for public bodies. All government departments report biennially to DfC on their heritage assets who then compile a report which is submitted to the Communities Committee of the NI Assembly. Five reports on the management of the government's historic estate have been produced to date. Currently local councils do not report.	There is opportunity for the principles of the Protocol to be widened out beyond central government, and for government to show leadership in the care of their historic estate. There is also opportunity for the protocol to inform the management of heritage assets, which can be supported and promoted by HE Policy, including the use of consultants and contractors who are appropriately qualified and experienced, the practice of carrying out regular condition surveys, identifying and recording assets and ensuring a high standard of design in any new work and in the alteration of the historic environment. This relationship with built environment can be further recognised between the Policy and the Architecture and Built Environment policy.	✓	✓

²⁶⁵ [Protocol for the Care of the Government Historic Estate | Department for Communities](#)

8.2 Part 2 – Cultural Heritage - Environmental Characteristics

SEA topic	SEA Objective
Cultural Heritage	• preserve historic buildings, archaeological sites and other culturally important features • create spaces and buildings that work well, wear well and look well • value and protect diversity and local distinctiveness

8.2.1 Cultural Heritage - Existing Baseline (see also individual aims at 9.5.1, 9.5.2, 9.5.3, 9.5.4)

- The Culture, Arts and Heritage Taskforce report ‘Investing in Creative Delivery’ describes the culture arts and heritage sector as including:
 - The Historic Environment Record of NI, which includes information on, sites and monuments, excavations, historic buildings, industrial heritage, defence heritage, historic parks, gardens and demesnes, and maritime archaeology is maintained is made available through the Department for Communities Historic Environment Division’s HERoNI.
 - NI has 2 statutory heritage advisory bodies - Historic Buildings Council and Historic Monuments Council
 - Art forms such as music, literature, drama, dance, circus, craft, community arts, theatre, traditional arts, visual arts, and the individual artists, practitioners, freelancers, organisations, festivals, community groups and venues working, practising and volunteering in these and related fields. There are 9 Arts arm’s length bodies, 95 organisations and 6 major festivals supported annually by the Arts Council; there are 3 Creative Learning Centres and 3 film and television festivals supported annually by NI Screen
 - Museums - there are three National Museums in NI – the Ulster Museum, Cultra: the Uster Folk Museum & Ulster Transport Museum, and the Ulster American Folk Park; there are 36 local Museums
 - Libraries – there are 98 public libraries and 16 mobile libraries
 - Observatory and Planetarium (1 – Armagh Observatory and Planetarium)

- Languages, including those being supported through the development of an Irish Language Strategy and an UlsterScots Language, Heritage and Culture Strategy; and Sign Language – both British Sign Language (BSL) and Irish Sign Language (ISL) - and promotion of Deaf culture and identity. There are 2 cross-border language and cultural agencies (Foras na Gaeilge and the Ulster-Scots Agency) supporting and working with community and voluntary groups, delivery partners, schools, businesses, local councils, youth programmes, festivals, summer camps, and music, drama, arts and heritage groups; there are 19 organisations supported through DfC sign language partnership funding
- Archives which receive, preserve and make available public records and privately deposited materials. There are >3 million documents held by the Public Record Office of NI (PRONI), among archives of historical, social and cultural importance
- Creative Industries, which include advertising; architecture; arts and antiques; computer games; crafts; design; designer fashion; film; TV and radio; music.; performing arts; publishing; software/digital media. Some of these areas and wider creativity are also supported by screen culture and education initiatives led by NI Screen; there is 1 architecture & design review body supporting high quality urban and rural places; there are >200 community festivals

Historic Environment

- There are over 57,500 known Heritage Assets in HERoNI. The location of known and designated assets is available on a spatial dataset (HED Map Viewer). Information on these assets is retained in HERoNI.
- Archaeological archives, are dispersed throughout Northern Ireland. HERoNI maintains HED's collection produced through rescue and research excavations, mainly undertaken at NI's State Care Sites. Commercially excavated material mostly resides with the commercial sector. HED in partnership with NMNI are working towards a Collection Resource Centre, where material will be appropriately archived and made accessible for further research. Material under the care of HERoNI is available to consult.
- A 'Heritage Delivers'²⁶⁶ document was published by the NI Heritage Stakeholder Group (who represent Northern Ireland's heritage sector) in 2019 and again in 2026. These statistical reports described the breadth of evidence that Heritage is already 'delivering' on the ground for people in Northern Ireland. The strength of this delivery can be further demonstrated by the large number of plans and programmes that the historic environment and therefore HE Policy could impact. However, what is also notable is that there are many gaps in this evidence, and that further evidence is needed. These gaps have been described below.

²⁶⁶ [NI HERITAGE DELIVERS 2026 CASE STUDIES AND STATISTICS ON HOW HERITAGE BENEFITS NORTHERN IRELAND | Heritage Delivers](#)

- The Independent Assessment used to help inform the third UK Climate Change Risk Assessment²⁶⁷ (CCRA3) assesses 61 risks and opportunities from climate change to Northern Ireland, including to business, infrastructure, housing, the natural environment, our health and from the impacts of climate change internationally. Risks requiring action include '*Risks to cultural heritage*'.

²⁶⁷ [third UK Climate Change Risk Assessment](#)

The table below describes the current baseline for the historic environment in NI.

Baseline	Supporting data (where available)
There is legislation in place (See p.188) to protect buildings of special architectural or historic interest through statutory designation, placing them on the 'List', and Planning Policy to manage statutory consents to alter them, protecting them from unauthorised or inappropriate development. There is legislation in place to give emergency temporary protection to buildings which may qualify for statutory designation in the form of Buildings Preservation Notices (BPNs).	• The number of listed buildings at 31 March 2024 was 9,124. Some listings include multiple buildings, therefore, the total number of buildings protected in this way is slightly higher. This was an increase of 11 per cent compared to 31 March 2004. • There were just over 600 listed building consent applications in 2023- 2024, and 1400 further non-statutory applications affecting listed buildings or their settings. • There were 99 active listed building enforcement requests at 31 March 2024. • The location of known and designated assets is available on a spatial dataset (HED Map Viewer)
There is legislation in place (see p.188) to protect historic monuments through statutory designation (Scheduling),	• 186 Monuments in State care (March 2024) • 2,053 scheduled historic monuments (March 2024) Overall, there has been a 36 per cent increase in the number of scheduled monuments since 2001/02. • There are 15,100 Sites and Monuments (March 2024) (excluding State Care and scheduled monuments) • The location of known and designated assets is available on a spatial dataset (HED Map Viewer) • There were 6 known incidents of unauthorised change to scheduled monuments in 2023-24. • Scheduled Monument Consent must be sought and granted for proposed works which may alter or disturb the fabric of a Scheduled historic monument, its ground surface or setting. Many Scheduled historic monuments are located in rural areas and these owners tend to come from within the agricultural sector. Prior to 2004/05, applications for Consent ran at numbers below 30 per year. From 2006/07 to 2017/18, applications ranged from 45 to 68. Application numbers increased in 2018/19 and reached 97 in 2019/20, the highest number presented in the time series above. The number of applications for Consent in 2023/24 was 50, which is more in line with figures for years prior to 2018/19. • An increase in government and local council projects, such as trails and site infrastructure, to aid well-being and tourism activities, is one reason for the increase in numbers during the period 2018/19 to 2022/23.

Condition of Scheduled Monuments is being monitored and has remained steady	HED carries out regular condition monitoring on historic monuments. In March 2024 it was noted that there was no significant change to the relative spread of condition – around two thirds of monuments were in good to very good condition, with the remaining third in Poor to Very Poor condition. Overall, around 6% of monuments were in very poor condition. Work to update the HARNI (Heritage at Risk) register to comprehensively include monuments is underway to target work to reverse the decline of these most vulnerable monuments.
There is legislation in place (See p.188) to protect underwater and intertidal heritage (Marine Heritage/MH) through statutory designation, to manage statutory consents to alter them and protect them from unauthorised or inappropriate development	4 protected wrecks (March 2024) 832 Maritime Heritage Sites (incl in Scheduled Monument Record) 384 known wreck sites - The location of known MH assets is available on a spatial dataset (HED Map Viewer) - There were 23 Marine licensing applications in 2023-24
There is legislation in place (See p.188) to protect Conservation Areas (CAs) (as areas of special architectural or historic interest) from inappropriate development/demolition.	There are 60 Conservation Areas (CAs) in Northern Ireland.
There is Planning Policy (SPPS) in place to protect Historic Parks and Gardens (HPGs) as a non-statutory material planning consideration.	- There are 663 HPGs Grade A and A* - The location of HPGs is available on a spatial dataset (HED Map Viewer)
There is Planning Policy (SPPS) in place to consider Industrial Heritage (IH) as a non-statutory material planning consideration.	- There are 16,062 (March 2023) sites on the Industrial Heritage Record - 12,663 (24%) protected by statutory designation(s). - The location of known IH assets is available on a spatial dataset (HED Map Viewer)
There is Planning Policy (SPPS) in place to consider Defence Heritage (DH) a non-statutory material planning consideration.	4593 (March 2023) Defence Heritage Sites 324 battle sites A comprehensive Defence Heritage Survey was carried out in 2020-21 which identified a further 3855 structures from the previous total of 738 at March 2020.

	The location of known DH assets is available on a spatial dataset (HED Map Viewer)
There is Planning Policy (SPPS) in place to consider Areas of Archaeological Interest (ASAI) as a non-statutory material planning consideration. An ASAI designation affords these landscapes policy protections in decision making on development and land-use change proposals which may affect the distinctive characteristics of the area.	• 11 Areas of Significant Archaeological Interest The • The location of ASAI is available on a spatial dataset (HED Map Viewer)
There is Planning Policy (SPPS) in place to protect Urban Heritage in the event of Development through non-statutory designation of Areas of Townscape Character (ATCs) Local Landscape Policy Areas (LLPAs), and the powers given to Local councils to create 'Local Lists'	• 205 ATCs • 1090 LLPAs • 0 Local Lists
There is a 'Gazetteer of Historic Nucleated Urban Settlements (GHNUS), a record being developed and continually enhanced by HED to help articulate the historic evolution of NI's urban and village settlements to consider Areas of Historic Settlements in the context of development	• 399 Historic Nucleated Settlements available on a spatial dataset (HED Map Viewer)

Fig 33 – Heritage Assets when all shown, cover much of Northern Ireland – HERoNI HED Map Viewer (Crown Copyright)

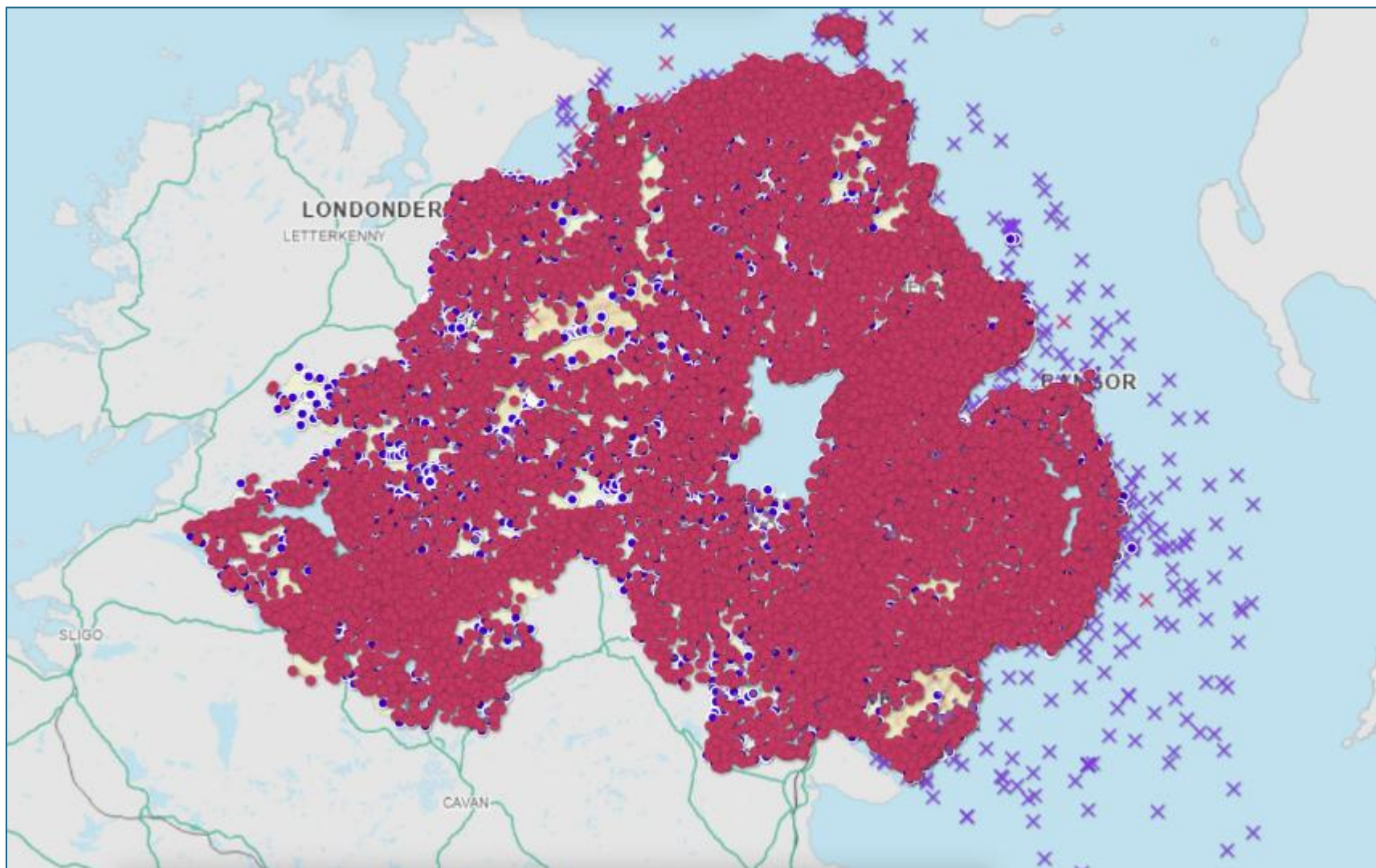


Fig 34 – Extract of map above showing heritage assets in the area around Lough Neagh and Belfast - (as Fig 33 above) – HERoNI HED Map Viewer (Crown Copyright)

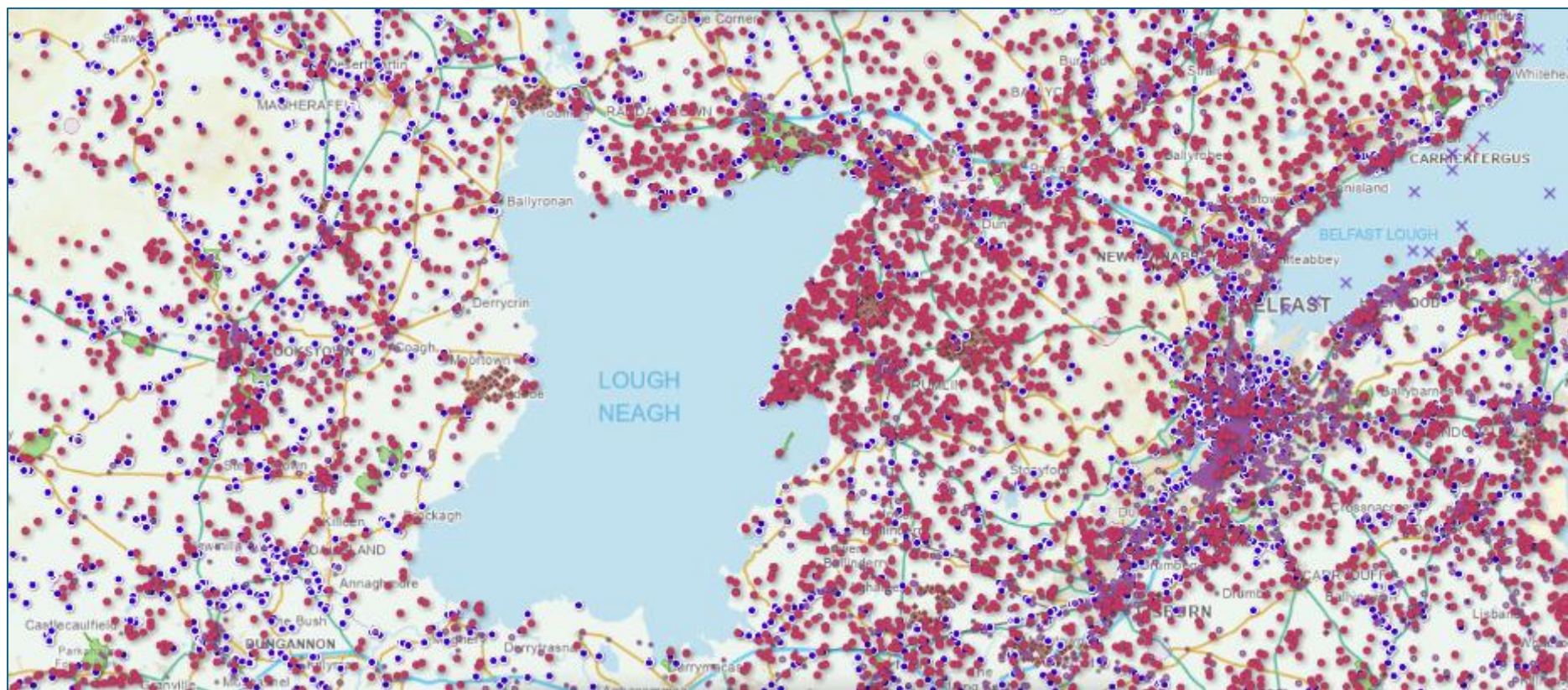
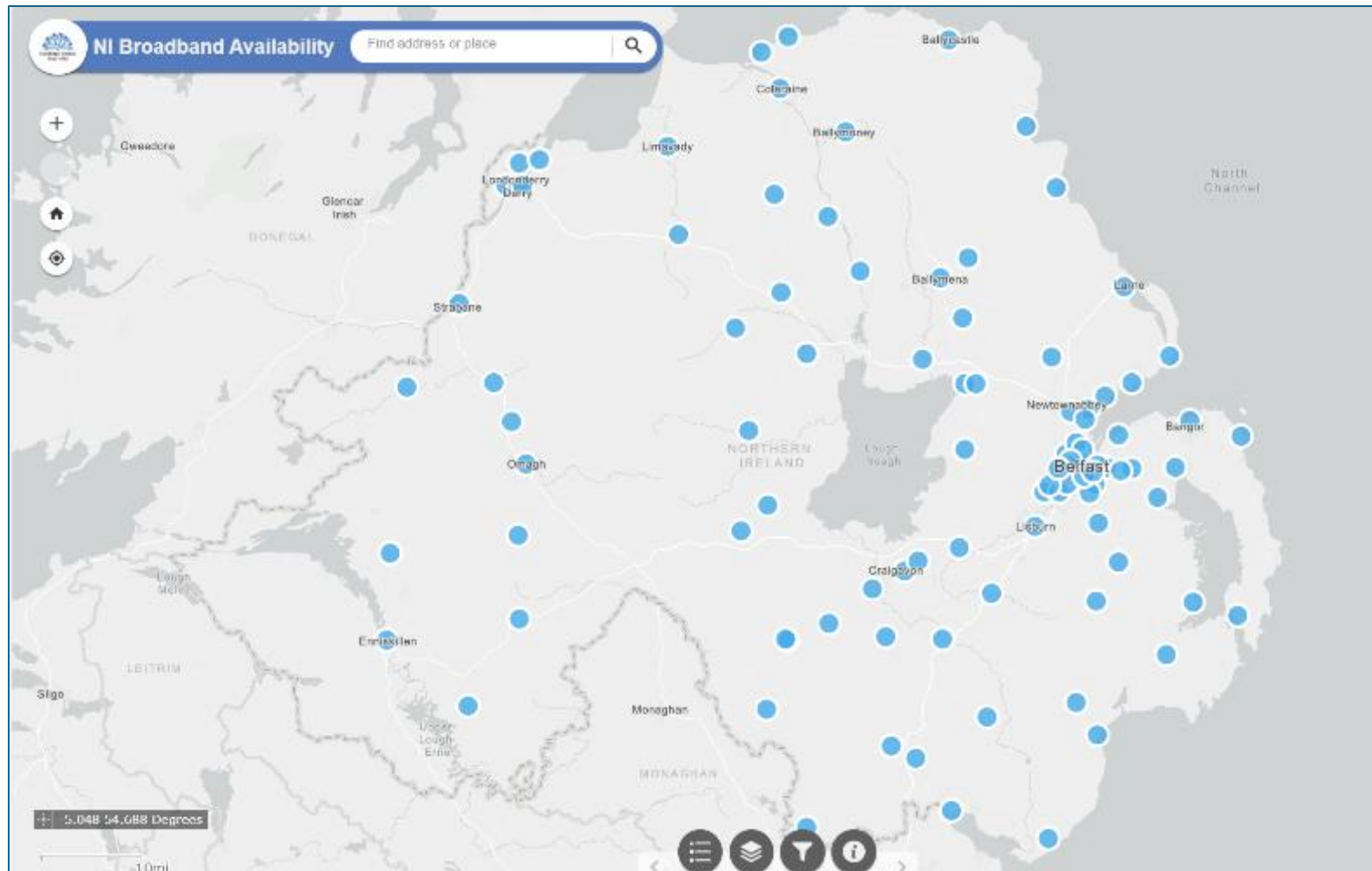
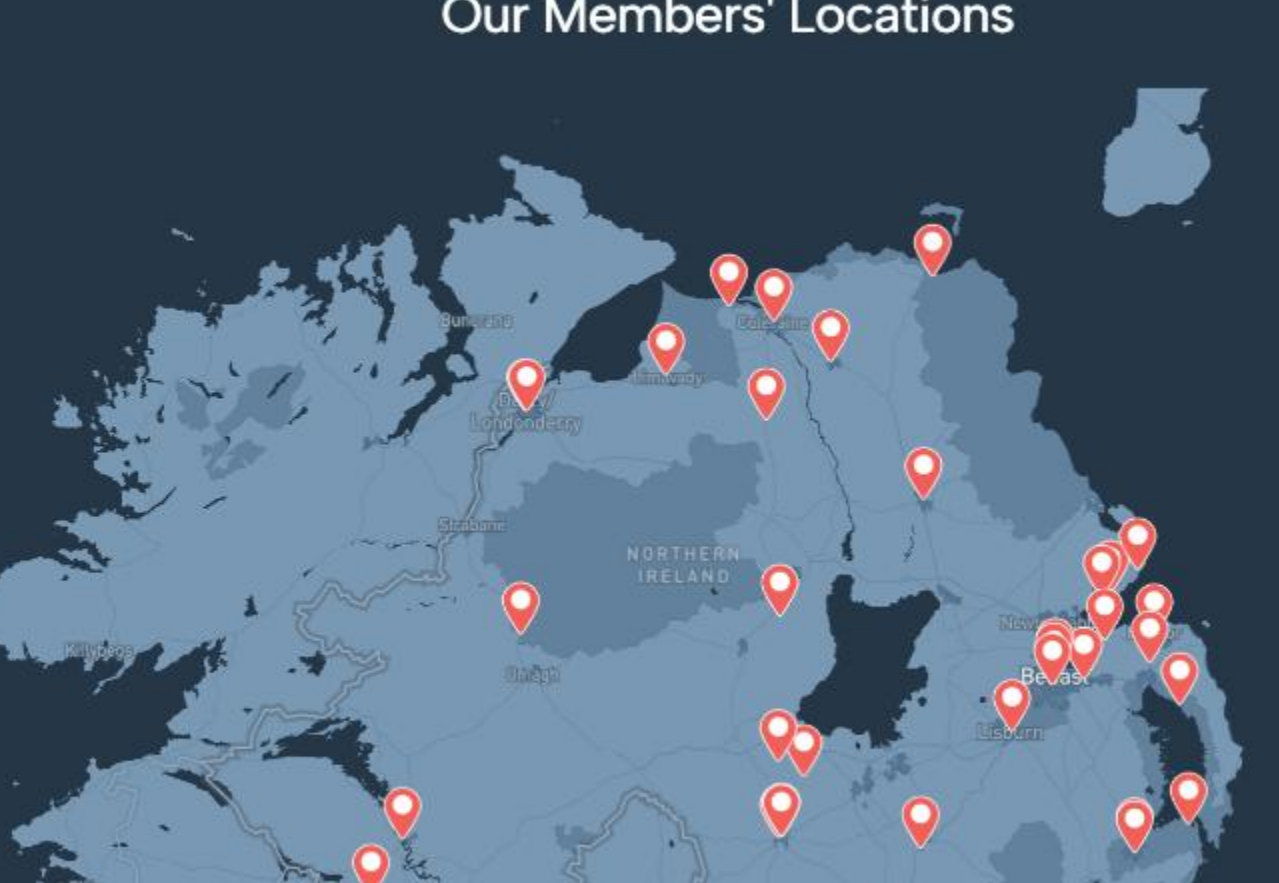


Fig 35 – Location of Libraries in NI (NI Assembly)



Our Members' Locations



A map of Northern Ireland with numerous red location pins indicating member locations. The pins are distributed across the region, with a higher concentration in the eastern part, particularly around Belfast and the surrounding areas. Labels for various locations are visible on the map, including Buncrana, Londonderry, Strabane, Dungannon, Banbridge, Newry, Carrickfergus, and Lisburn. The map also shows the coastline and major roads.

Fig 37 – Sample Area - Location of Cultural venues in Belfast (Late Night Art - Belfast)



8.2.2 Cultural Heritage - Environmental problems (see also individual aims at 9.5.1, 9.5.2, 9.5.3, 9.5.4)

- There are many historic artefacts, archives and information not relating to the built environment within the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) and numerous National and Local Museums and Libraries. Much of this information is of mutual interest – for example in the case of Genealogy, and the association of graveyards, churches and family history. No strategy exists at present to better join up these resources. The HCC Programme²⁶⁸ should address this gap.
- There is much cross over between tangible and intangible heritage including cultural heritage relating to the historic environment. No strategy exists at present to better join up these resources. The HCC Programme²⁶⁹ should address this gap.

Historic Environment

8.2.2 This table below describes environmental problems which relate to the historic environment in Northern Ireland

Environmental Problem	Supporting data (where available at this stage)
There are a number of Conventions, Declarations and Protocols concerning the protection of and right to access and avail of a well-cared for historic environment which have been ratified by the UK (see Table 1 above). Whilst it has met its obligations to protect the historic environment through legislation and development control (RDS) and Planning Policy (SPPS), Northern Ireland Government has underperformed in its ratified obligations in that it has never had an Historic Environment Policy which will set out how the historic environment should be managed to include wider sustainable development and social capital aspects of government policy which may and should be affected by the care of and use of its historic environment.	Conventions, Declarations and Protocols are the commonest form of international agreements to encourage a co-ordinated response to managing the environment, including cultural heritage. Currently the poor conditions in which we currently store some of the archaeological collection of NI – and the extent to which we fail to provide storage or access at all for the majority of this collection – does not meet standards to which the UK Government since 2000 has been committed through the Valetta Convention. By virtue of ratifying this Convention, there is an obligation under international law to comply with its provisions There has never been an Historic Environment Policy in Northern Ireland which sets out how the Historic Environment should be managed.

²⁶⁸ [Heritage, Culture and Creativity \(HCC\) Programme | Department for Communities](#)

²⁶⁹ [Heritage, Culture and Creativity \(HCC\) Programme | Department for Communities](#)

The condition of listed buildings has declined significantly in the last 20 years. Owners of historic monuments face similar challenges to listed buildings owners though the condition of monuments has not worsened at the same rate. This is due to various factors including: • ‘The Conservation Deficit²⁷⁰’ – owners of buildings and monuments are aware of the importance of conserving heritage assets but not willing to incur private financial loss; assistance from government is required to encourage private owners to maintain listed buildings and scheduled monuments. • The perception of practical challenges with heritage projects • A lack of availability of skilled people in the sector	In the Survey on the Condition of Listed Buildings²⁷¹ carried (2023/24): the overall condition of the majority of buildings appears to have suffered a 24.4 percentage point worsening in 20 years. Monuments have deteriorated at a rate of 20% over the same period. In the Thatch Survey carried out in 2023 Condition of one quarter of all thatched buildings was poor or very poor: V poor 17%, Poor 8%, Average 22%, Good 30%, v good 23%. In the listed building owners survey²⁷²²⁷³, over half of respondents (56%) said that it is difficult or very difficult to find skilled builders and 67% of respondents who selected at least one obstacle said that the cost of suitable skilled contractors and/or suitable materials is an obstacle to maintenance. 21% of respondents said that it is difficult or very difficult to find skilled labour. These results indicate that private market in Northern Ireland may lack suitably skilled conservation workers to undertake works, with a large proportion of listed building owners finding it difficult or very difficult to find skilled builders. 21% of scheduled monument owners survey respondents stated that it is difficult or very difficult to find skilled labour. In the listed building owners survey²⁷⁴²⁷⁵, when asked for obstacles preventing maintenance, lack of government funding to meet higher maintenance costs was the most cited obstacle, with 77% of respondents who declared at least one obstacle stating it. 75% of respondents said funding/tax breaks would help encourage them to maintain.
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²⁷⁰ Due to the higher than average cost of maintaining and repairing heritage assets together with low property values, the cost incurred by owners to care for heritage assets often does not equal the return on that investment. Owners of buildings and monuments are aware of the importance of conserving heritage assets but not willing to incur private financial loss for non-monetary benefits or benefits which are societal and not personal. The term ‘Conservation Deficit’ is used to describe this situation which is directly proportional to property values.

²⁷¹ [Survey on the Condition of Listed Buildings | Department for Communities](#)

²⁷² [Listed Buildings Survey](#)

²⁷³ [Market Failure Analysis of the Heritage Sector in Northern Ireland](#)

²⁷⁴ [Listed Buildings Survey; Scheduled Historic Monuments Survey](#)

²⁷⁵ [Market Failure Analysis of the Heritage Sector in Northern Ireland](#)

	When asked to state obstacles preventing maintenance 19% of respondents held a view that their listed buildings worth does not justify the cost of investing in it. In the scheduled monument owners survey²⁷⁶, when asked about obstacles preventing owners doing more to look after their monument, 40% said that there is no financial benefit, and 34% of respondents said that the effort and cost is not justified. When asked what would assist you in managing or carrying out repairs to your monuments, 70% of respondents said grant funding.
Market failure is partly the result of a ‘Conservation Deficit’²⁷⁷ in all but the most affluent parts of NI with no guaranteed funding available to supplement mainstream repair costs and make repair and/or development attractive. There is less money to invest in heritage assets following periods of economic uncertainty, exacerbating this issue.	A study on market failure²⁷⁸ in the heritage sector in Northern Ireland concluded that there is market failure. This study includes four reports: a literature review, survey of listed building owners, survey of scheduled monument owners, and a market failure analysis of the heritage sector in Northern Ireland. Annual Government funding for listed buildings and monuments has reduced from £3-4million between 2011 2015 to £0-320k between 2016 and 2023.
Heritage at Risk in Northern Ireland (HARNI)²⁷⁹ has doubled in the last decade. This encompasses a variety of issues including: • fire/vandalism (unsecure assets) • vacancy leading to poor maintenance and neglect • threat of demolition due to a preference for new build • perception of funding and practical challenges with heritage projects	The current (March 2024) figure of 1,111 is just over double the 527 structures recorded in 2018/19. There are 1366 Central Government Owned Buildings, of which 5.7% are on the Heritage at Risk Register²⁸⁰. Though this figure is not reported as standard, in 2003 a written question in the House of Lords by Lord Laird asked how many properties had been demolished in conservation areas

²⁷⁶ [Scheduled Historic Monuments Survey](#)

²⁷⁷ Due to the higher than average cost of maintaining and repairing heritage assets together with low property values, the cost incurred by owners to care for heritage assets often does not equal the return on that investment. Owners of buildings and monuments are aware of the importance of conserving heritage assets but not willing to incur private financial loss for non-monetary benefits or benefits which are societal and not personal. The term ‘Conservation Deficit’ is used to describe this situation which is directly proportional to property values.

²⁷⁸ [Market Failure Analysis of the Heritage Sector in Northern Ireland](#)

²⁷⁹ The majority of assets on this register are listed buildings. Some unlisted historic buildings of local interest (mainly in Conservation Areas) and some historic monuments are also included. [Heritage at Risk | Department for Communities](#)

²⁸⁰ [The Protocol for the Care of the Government Estate](#)

lack of availability of skilled people in the sector ('dying' trades for example, and small numbers of community Heritage Development Officers/project leaders to bring together users with buildings).	in NI in the last five years and the answer was that 195 had been given permission though no figures were reported on whether all 195 were demolished.²⁸¹ There has been an average of 4 fires recorded in listed buildings each year since 2018.
Whilst designated Heritage assets are also risk due to market failure (see above), undesignated assets are at exacerbated risk of market failure due to lack of regulation.	16,062 Historic buildings worthy of recording are included on the NI Buildings database – this means that circa 7,000 heritage assets were worthy of survey and are recorded but fell short of being of 'special interest'. Since 2015, no councils in NI have used their powers to create 'local lists' of heritage assets as part of the development of Local Development Plans which include a review of Conservation Areas, ATCs and AVCs.
Government is not always seen to be meeting its responsibilities as promised in the Protocol for the Care of the Government Historic Estate²⁸².	Whilst there are 100% of Government Departments have Departmental Heritage Officers, and 100% of Departments have reported on their actions against the 12 points of the Protocol, 5.7% of the Government's Historic Estate is on the HARNI register. Some vacancy is to be expected as functions change, and 5.7% is about half the 12% rate for all Listed Buildings, but when Government has set out to 'lead by example' it could still be lower. Local Councils do not report on the Protocol for the Care of the Government Estate. Although recommended to Councils by the NI Executive in 2011, none have fully adopted the reporting mechanism of the Protocol; some councils have agreed to abide by its principles within Heritage plans.
Heritage assets are at risk because they remain undiscovered. This is because surveying for designation has largely been paused, with leaving potentially significant heritage assets at risk from development/demolition.	A second, area-based survey of all historic buildings (the Second Survey) has been underway at varying capacity since 1997. As of 2025, 70% of NI has been second surveyed, but 30% has remained unsurveyed due to under resourcing. There has been a modest increase of 11% in the number of buildings

²⁸¹ [Northern Ireland: Conservation Areas and Demolitions: 18 Dec 2003: Hansard Written Answers - TheyWorkForYou](#)

²⁸² [The Protocol for the Care of the Government Estate](#)

	listed in recent years, with a total of 9,124 statutory listings in 2023/24, compared with 8,191 in 2003/04. At this rate it is estimated that to complete the survey will take 65 years. This leaves buildings worthy of protection at risk. As older buildings become rarer and our understanding of heritage evolves, (such as the significance of vernacular heritage), this delay has left potentially ‘listable’ buildings vulnerable to demolition or alteration. This situation further exacerbates the perception that designation stands in the way of progress, as buildings are often brought forward for consideration at the point where they are about to be developed. This situation further exacerbates the perception that designation stands in the way of progress, as buildings are often brought forward for consideration at the point where they are about to be developed.
Local Councils are under-resourced with reference to the historic environment, and the management of heritage assets which are not designated but are valuable to places.	16,062 Historic buildings worthy of recording are included on the NI Buildings database – this means that circa 7,000 heritage assets were worthy of survey and are recorded but fell short of being of ‘special interest’. Although councils have powers to create ‘local listings’ no council has availed of these powers. Around a third (4 out of 11) of district councils in Northern Ireland employ temporary or permanent dedicated Heritage Development Officers. This compares to for example 100% in County Councils in the Republic of Ireland.
Northern Ireland is at Risk from climate change impacts.	The Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022²⁸³ (Act) sets a target of an at least 100% reduction in net zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050. Currently, evidence is available to demonstrate that re-use compares favourably to demolition and re-build. There is an opportunity to re-use heritage assets in order to mitigate against the impact of carbon expenditure in construction, alleviating Northern Ireland’s contribution to climate change.

²⁸³ [Climate Change Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2022](#)

	The Draft Circular Economy Strategy says that ‘<i>More re-using of building materials and components, a greater focus on renovation and retrofitting rather than new-build can produce a 7.7% decrease in material footprint.</i>’²⁸⁴ Data on this opportunity en masse is not available specific to NI, however data does exist (Historic England²⁸⁵) to put re-use in front of demolition and new build when considering development. In the Listed Building Owners’ Survey ‘²⁸⁶<i>The third key barrier to maintenance of listed buildings identified in the survey was insufficient knowledge and advice (26% respondents).</i>’²⁸⁷ Poorly maintained buildings are at a much greater risk from climate change impacts (UAH).
Heritage assets may be at risk from coastal, fluvial and pluvial flooding and erosion related to a changing climate, changing land use and agricultural practices. The full picture is not yet visible or understood in NI.	No figures available – work is underway through the HED digital transformation to access statistics on climate change impacts to historic monuments, and the potential to use monuments in agricultural landscapes as biodiversity areas by Department for Communities Historic Environment Division (HED) HED and others partnered with the National Trust to pilot a Climate Change Hazard Mapping Tool, however no date has been collated yet. In the Listed Building Condition Survey²⁸⁸, condition was cross references with areas of high climate change risk (flooding etc). No correlation was noted, however this may be a long term trend, and therefore this outcome remains inconclusive. We are aware of the impacts on historic masonry structures; bridges embankments etc, and recent high profile losses and work to stabilise retaining walls following persistent flooding.

²⁸⁴ [Circular Economy Strategy for Northern Ireland | Department for the Economy](#)

²⁸⁵ [Monitoring and Measuring the Built Historic Environment’s Pathway to Net Zero | Heritage Counts | Historic England](#)

²⁸⁶ [Listed Buildings Survey](#)

²⁸⁷ [Listed Buildings Survey](#)

²⁸⁸ [Listed Buildings Survey](#)

Further risks to heritage assets are due to maladaptation (for example due to incorrect specification for retrofit causing material harm.)	No data on the extent of the retrofit issue has been extracted for Northern Ireland, however this has been reported by Historic England, Historic Scotland the Sustainable Traditional Buildings Alliance and IHBC. ²⁸⁹
Risks to heritage assets due to maladaptation include Peatland restoration works which carry the risk of inadvertent harm to both designated and undesignated heritage assets, including those not yet identified.	Evidence from individual case studies highlights failure to consider heritage assets in peatland restoration can result in damage to archaeological remains. This risk has also been acknowledged through anecdotal reporting by agencies including Historic England, Historic Scotland, and Bord na Móna.
Contribution of the historic environment to biodiversity is not yet fully understood.	Currently, spatial mapping exists which could provide a picture of the contribution of protected areas such as scheduled monument zones within for example farmland or Historic Parks and Gardens to biodiversity. This information cannot yet be collated.
The Historic environment is not meeting its potential to support the economic, cultural and environmental needs specific to people in Northern Ireland because this potential is not fully understood.	Data on how the historic environment can meet social, economic, cultural and environmental needs has been recorded in other jurisdictions in the UK and in the ROI but though statistical information and case studies have been collated in the past²⁹⁰, no such recent data exists for NI to allow a comparable calculation. The ‘Market Failure’²⁹¹ seen across NI is not as widespread elsewhere in the UK - existing but less densely and in a different context. NI is unique in its need and how the historic environment can meet its unique needs. Data on how heritage delivers does exist²⁹², however it does not exist sufficiently to fully measure impacts, nor do the necessary statistics exist to monitor its progress in delivering it in Northern Ireland.

²⁸⁹ [When Retrofit Goes Wrong | Heritage Counts | Historic England](#)

²⁹⁰ [Heritage Delivers | Treasure the Past, Enrich the Future](#)

²⁹¹ [Market Failure Analysis of the Heritage Sector in Northern Ireland](#)

²⁹² [Heritage Delivers | Treasure the Past, Enrich the Future](#)

	Historic Buildings contribute to a low-carbon, circular economy²⁹³, however no NI specific data is available to understand this potential. Heritage places are one of the biggest draws to Northern Ireland for Tourists. No studies have yet been carried out to demonstrate how investing in maintaining heritage could result in higher numbers of visitors. In the nations Brand Index 2025, Northern Ireland's top two Attributes were 'Natural Beauty' (20th out of 50) and 'Environment' (21st). Since 2016, all 23 Attribute scores for Northern Ireland have shown improvement. The most notable increases were in respondents' willingness to 'work and live' in Northern Ireland (+0.35) and perceptions of Northern Ireland as being 'rich in historic buildings' (+0.29). In terms of ranking, 'historic buildings' (along with 'natural beauty') achieved the largest improvement, each rising three places.²⁹⁴
The non-monetary opportunities and benefits of owning, caring for, living amongst and using heritage assets are not fully understood in a Northern Ireland context i.e. its positive impacts on social value, quality of life, health, education, identity and pride in place.	Data on how the historic environment contributes to health and well-being has been recorded in other jurisdictions in the UK and in the ROI, but though case studies exist, a comparable calculation of the benefits of the historic environment in real terms to NI's health, wellbeing and quality of life does not yet exist. Similarly to above, there is a lack of wellbeing, quality of life and social value research directly relating to the historic environment and there are currently no directly measurable metrics to monitor change/ impact which are specific to NI's circumstances and unique historic environment. However, NISRA's Continuous Household survey reported that: visiting a heritage site had statistically greater life satisfaction than those who did not (7.9 versus 7.6) There are no figures available on the number of heritage volunteers in Northern Ireland. Some figures are available to report on the number of 'openers' each year in the annual European Heritage Open Days events in NI, however overall NI figures are not collated currently, and don't reflect the large number of heritage activities and events which take place each year across a diverse range of organisations – both public and private.

²⁹³ [Heritage in a Circular Economy | Heritage Counts | Historic England](#)

²⁹⁴ [Nation Brands Index | The Executive Office](#)

The unique potential for Northern Ireland’s historic environment to be used as a tool for peace community cohesion, and good relations has not been fully explored.	The relationship between the historic environment and social capital was demonstrated in a recent study by Mak et al (2023), which found that people living in places with greater historic built environment experience higher levels of personal relationships, social network support, and civic engagement (1).²⁹⁵ This is of particular resonance for a post-conflict society such as Northern Ireland, where communities can together explore shared heritage, contributing to increased respect and community cohesion. We will encourage people to create shared, inclusive narratives, emphasising our common heritage and highlighting elements of local history that are shared by all communities, such as natural beauty, cultural diversity and collective achievements.
Heritage assets are not equally accessed across age and socio-economic scales. The historic environment is not visited equally across society in NI which is exacerbated by the view that heritage is ‘elitist’ and ‘difficult’. This issue is accelerating due to a further legacy of neglect / lack of maintenance undermining the value of heritage buildings among society (see condition above).	In (NISRA)’s annual Continuous Household Survey 2024-25²⁹⁶ adults with a disability were found to be less likely to have visited a place of historic interest than those without a disability (56% and 67% respectively). Analysis by deprivation level showed that adults living in the least deprived areas were more likely to have visited a place of historic interest than adults (77% and 51% respectively) and children (73% and 63% respectively)²⁹⁷. In 2024/25 a higher proportion of adults from the Protestant community had visited a place of historic interest within the previous year (70%) than those from the Catholic community (57%).²⁹⁸
There is a general misunderstanding of regulation. Statutory consultation is perceived as prohibitive, and that ‘additional red tape’ causes delays in development. and	The AREA Report (Adaptive Re-use of Existing Assets²⁹⁹) by the Strategic Investment Board (SIB) concluded by criticising ‘heritage authorities’ and suggesting reform as a way forward for adaptive re-use of heritage buildings.

²⁹⁵ [The Role of Heritage in Bringing People Together | Heritage Counts | Historic England](#)

²⁹⁶ [Experience of culture, arts and heritage by adults in Northern Ireland](#)

²⁹⁷ [Engagement in culture, arts, heritage and sport by young people in Northern Ireland 2022 | Department for Communities](#)

²⁹⁸ *‘using cultural assets to bring people together for therapeutic or social purpose’*

The ‘Together: Building a United Community’ (T:BUC) Strategy, reflects the NI Executive’s commitment to improving community relations in Northern Ireland and continuing the journey towards a more united and shared society. The strategy outlines how government, community and individuals will work together to build a united community via a range of initiatives.

²⁹⁹ [AREA-Report-2024.pdf](#)

there is a misperception that listed building consent and archaeological planning and licensing consents contribute to this delay. Due to a reduction in surveying for designation, discovery of assets can be at the point of application for permissions for removal or modification – leading to delays and exacerbating this perception.

Enforcement of heritage legislation and planning policy in NI are under resourced and not always carried through – this creates a ‘piecemeal’ view of regulation, further exacerbating the issue.

8.3 Part 3 – Cultural Heritage – HE Policy Impact

SEA topic	SEA Objective
Cultural Heritage	• preserve historic buildings, archaeological sites and other culturally important features • create spaces and buildings that work well, wear well and look well • value and protect diversity and local distinctiveness

- Implementation of HE Policy is unlikely to have significant negative effects on Northern Ireland’s cultural heritage.
- An **Historic Environment policy is needed to provide high level leadership** on the Northern Ireland Government’s attitude to the historic environment which will impact policy, plans and strategies across all parts of Government, including the Programme for Government.
- HE Policy can demonstrate that the historic environment is connected to other relevant priorities like:
 - **Regeneration**
 - **Housing**
 - **Health and well being**
 - **Sustainability-led development and employment**
 - **Tourism and Economic Growth**and
 - **Good places** that people can be proud of, places that help people to thrive - leading to better health, better life chances and stronger communities.
- Future consideration may also be given to amending Northern Ireland Heritage Legislation, to ensure that it is fit for purpose.

- The Culture, Arts and Heritage Taskforce Report³⁰⁰ in 2023 described a ‘*continuing funding crisis..*’ with ‘*organisations and practitioners “doing more with less”*’. HE Policy can highlight the **need for and direct investment in the historic environment** outside its own ‘sector’; HE Policy can set in place policy which aspires to conserve, enhance and promote Northern Ireland’s historic environment, and can impact other strategies, plans and programmes as a material consideration – protecting, conserving, maintaining and enhancing spaces and buildings as well as landscapes
- HE Policy can have significantly positive effects on all aspects of the environment, stemming from the historic environment which is intrinsically linked to a large proportion of Northern Ireland’s cultural heritage in the form of the Arts, Creative Industries, Traditional Heritage like music, food and crafts, Museums, Archives and Libraries; cultural heritage reaches beyond tangible assets to intangible heritage – HE Policy aspires to engage and enthuse new audiences, **reinforce cultural identity and connect people with all aspects of cultural heritage** – benefitting people
- HE Policy can help to highlight and arrest the decline in condition of the historic environment. As reported by Historic England³⁰¹, research demonstrates that **preventative maintenance strategies result in economic savings** as expensive and unnecessary repairs are prevented. Delaying repairs to historic buildings could increase the costs of repairs by 15% to 20%. Furthermore, it causes cumulative consequential damage, where one problem leads to another issue elsewhere in the building fabric. There is therefore an accelerating issue because of unavailability of funding in Northern Ireland to support owners to maintain historic buildings and monuments, exacerbated by ‘market failure’ of the historic environment. HE Policy can **demonstrate the investment potential in preventative maintenance** as well as the potential to **leverage investment from other sectors and build community wealth – contributing to preservation and regeneration**.
- Listed Building and Monuments Owners Survey results seem to support that most respondents are aware of the importance of heritage assets but not willing to incur private financial loss, with assistance from government required to encourage private owners to maintain listed buildings and scheduled monuments. HE Policy could make the case for investment in the **historic environment as a public good**.
- HE Policy can make the case for the **economic value of the historic environment including the ‘heritage premium’**, marketing and tourism
- HE Policy can highlight the **opportunity to re-use and retrofit heritage assets to contribute to mitigation against climate change** impacts.

³⁰⁰ [Investing in Creative Delivery – A report from the Culture, Arts & Heritage Strategy Taskforce | Department for Communities](#)

³⁰¹ [The Role of Maintenance and Repair in a Low Carbon Future | Heritage Counts | Historic England](#)

8.3.1 Potential Negative Effects and Mitigation

As highlighted previously, the avoidance of damage to all heritage assets – whether designated or not - is highly desirable owing to their finite nature as a resource. Compensation measures (offsetting) are not usually appropriate, as heritage assets can't be re-created. Alternative proposals that avoid or result in less harm to the historic environment should be considered preferentially before considering whether mitigation is appropriate.

Mitigation measures for the implementation stage of a planning application are the most appropriate method of dealing with situations where damage can't be avoided.

Consideration can also be given to mitigation measures that enhance the historic environment.

Examples of possible mitigation measures for potential harm to the historic environment might include:

- Strengthened references to the historic environment in policy framework, criteria and guidance e.g. addition of a specific historic environment policy, regeneration policies, planning obligations;
- Preparation of detailed historic environment policy guidance or design guide;
- Heritage conservation requirements including positive measures to promote the conservation and enjoyment of heritage assets within site specific development policies
- Undertaking of detailed historic characterisation studies to inform development;
- Environmental Impact Assessments – particularly supporting technical appendices that focus on archaeological interpretation
- Use of Article 4 Directions to protect the character of conservation areas;
- Specific conditions included within Development Consent Orders or other regulatory consent Preparation of management plans for heritage assets
- Potential dedicated Heritage Officer within all Councils and Local listings within Council Areas to conserve, protect and enhance heritage assets and undesignated heritage assets
- Completion of feasibility studies to help facilitate the sustainable use of a heritage asset.
- Promoting and supporting maintenance above all; exploring and evidence to support funding spent on maintenance as an investment rather than a cost; making this accessible and mainstreamed without additional levels of controls and frameworks.

8.3.2 Likely impact without HE Policy

- Without HE Policy, the condition of the historic environment is likely to continue to decline – resulting in the permanent loss of a unique, finite resource.
- Without HE Policy, other sectors, people and parts of the environment might miss out on using heritage assets as a resource for wider benefits: regeneration, housing, culture and tourism, employment and good health.
- Without HE Policy opportunity to re-use and retrofit heritage assets to contribute to mitigation against climate change impacts may be missed

8.4 Cumulative, Synergistic or Secondary Effects - the backbone of HE Policy

Draft HE Policy is organised under three Sustainable Development Goals identified by the Culture, Arts and Heritage taskforce³⁰² - to **strengthen, connect** and **innovate** for the heritage sector.

These Sustainable Development Goals are not independent, they are interdependent. The same may be said of the interdependency between the historic environment and the natural environment, the urban environment, intangible cultural heritage, climate change impacts or society. Strengthening one may provide benefits for the other, and so on. But any negative impacts may also have unintended consequences. of this impact is reflected in this Environmental Assessment and throughout HE Policy.

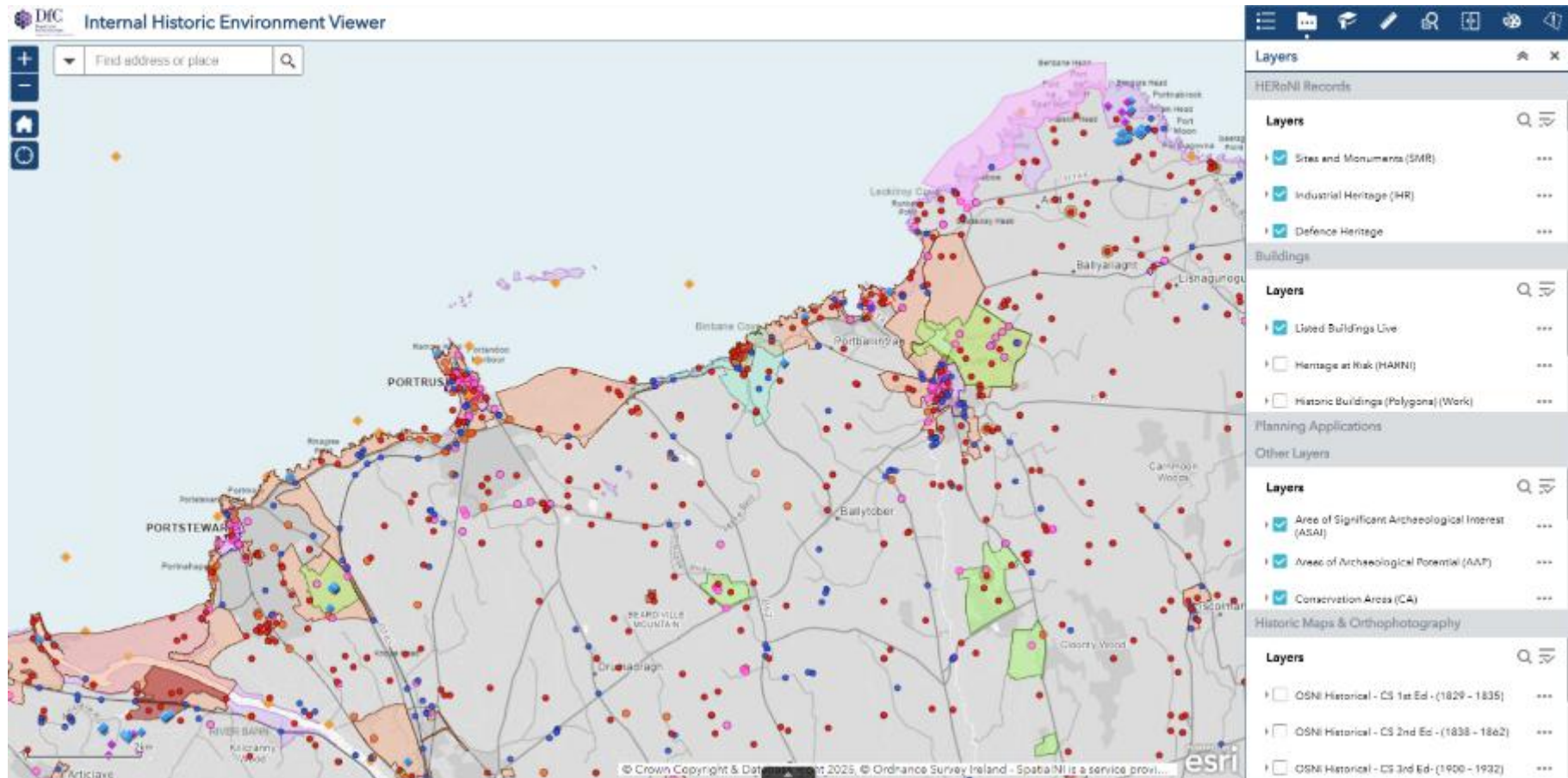
Cumulative, secondary or synergistic impacts on heritage assets and places occur in different ways:

- **Cumulative** – where individually minor impacts can accumulate to have significant effects
- **Synergistic** – where separate minor impacts interact to produce a total effect greater than the sum of the individual effects
- **Secondary or indirect** – where effects are not a direct result of the plan but occur away from the original effect as a result of its impact(s).

³⁰² [Heritage, Culture and Creativity \(HCC\) Programme | Department for Communities](#)

Potential negative effects have been identified and proposals to mitigate against those effects have been proposed. But in fact, this interdependency is an opportunity – HE Policy which has partnership at its core and looks for mutually beneficial outcomes has the potential for a greater reach – not ‘heritage for heritage’s sake’ but heritage for people, communities, places, planet and peace. Demonstrated by the following table, this combined effect is the basis for the final HE Policy aims. These recognise the historic environment as being one part of a greater whole – which includes both built and natural environments.

Fig 38 - below showing part of NI's north coast demonstrates the interdependency of places, nature (land and sea) and historic landscape in LLPAs (Local Landscape Policy Areas shown in Orange)



8.4.1 HE Policy - Inter-relationships

The table below attempts to visualise the inter-relationship and impacts on aspects of the environment which should result from Sustainable Development Goals and HE Policy.

Key:  does affect **++** highly positive **+** positive **+ -** positive and negative

	Material Assets	Landscape	Population and Health	Climatic Factors	Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	Soil, Air and Water	Cultural Heritage
Strengthening: 'Our Goal - A well cared for historic environment where best practice is universal.'	 ++	 ++	 ++	 +	 +	 +	 ++
Connecting: 'Our Goal - Thriving places - where the unique value of heritage is understood and enjoyed.'	 ++	 ++	 ++	 + -	 + -	 + -	 ++
Innovating: 'Our Goal - A flourishing historic environment sector which is protected, sustained, accessed, and used to its full potential.'	 ++	 ++	 ++	 ++	 +	 +	 ++

The table below highlights the key interrelationships identified in this SEA. In fact, there is an interrelationship across all aspects of the environment describe under the SEA topics to each other. Key interrelationships for HE Policy are between cultural heritage and material assets, landscape, and population and human health. There may also be ‘intangible’ interactions between factors; for instance, many sites of biodiversity value may also comprise sites of heritage significance.

Material Assets							
Landscape	✓						
Population and Health	✓	✓					
Climatic Factors	✓	✓	✓				
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Soil, Air and Water	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Cultural Heritage	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Material Assets	Landscape	Population and Health	Climatic Factors	Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	Soil, Air and Water	Cultural Heritage

8.5 Part 3 - Suggested HE Policy Aims – Cultural Heritage

The HE Policy aims which follow describe policy to support partnerships – and the cumulative, synergistic and secondary effects that partnering with other policy areas and activity can have which will benefit the historic environment, but also people, places, the planet and peace. The Baseline and Environmental problems relating to these specific areas which may not spring from aspects of the environment/SEA Topics are listed with each aim.

8.5.1 Policy Aim 13: Using heritage assets to contribute to Programme for Government including the Wellbeing Framework: Stronger Economy, Better Homes, Healthier Lives and Brighter Futures

Existing Baseline:

- 100% of Government Departments have Departmental Heritage Officers
- 100% of Departments have reported on their actions against the 12 points of the Protocol In their Protocol for the most recent returns in 2023;
- Departments reported that Central Government currently owns 1366 heritage assets, including:
 - 657 listed buildings and
 - 537 Monuments (including State Care Monuments)
 - a further 135 undesignated historic buildings.
- 9 of 12 Government Departments had at least one building on HARNI (2023)
- Local councils own a large number of heritage assets too, but these are not currently recorded or reported on.
- Councils fund communities to repair and look after buildings in conservation areas – there are 60 Conservation Areas in Northern Ireland.
- Many local councils fund heritage activity which complements physical assets – tours, conservation volunteering, traditional cultural activities like music, storytelling, crafts or bread-making for example.
- Most local councils also own and manage museums which hold complimentary artefacts and archives to HERoNI
- Local museums containing local collections are sometimes counted into statistics if they are accredited (38 as March 2024³⁰³).
- There is ongoing and future scope for ‘unseen’ investment in heritage by government. For example, though not the headline, investment in heritage is happening through City and Growth Deals at Carrickefergus Castle, Belfast City and Derry and Strabane City and Growth Deals, and in less obvious ways which can be shown as creating impact through the PfG’s Wellbeing Framework.

³⁰³ Museums Council

Environmental Problems:

- We know that Government is not always seen to be meeting its responsibilities as promised in the Protocol for the Care of the Government Historic Estate³⁰⁴. 5.7% of the Government's Historic Estate is on the HARNI register. Some vacancy is to be expected as functions change, and 5.7% is about half the 12% rate for all Listed Buildings, but when Government has set out to 'lead by example' it could still be lower. This means that they are probably vacant, likely to be no longer in use, and at risk of being poorly maintained .
- Though it exists on other parts of the UK, targeted research on how historic places and heritage activity can contribute to government targets like those for better health, wellbeing, community cohesion, good relations and education does not exist and is therefore not understood for Northern Ireland, which has a unique set of circumstances. This absence of understanding - both wider problems associated with decline and positive opportunities missed to use heritage - is notable in the absence of any reference to heritage in the PfG, despite the large number of assets in NI.
- Local Councils do not report on the Protocol for the Care of the Government Estate. Although recommended to Councils by the NI Executive in 2011, none have fully adopted the reporting mechanism of the Protocol; some councils have agreed to abide by its principles within Heritage plans. Less than a third of local councils in NI have dedicated heritage officers.
- In the past projects which for example compare heritage vacancy to housing need are not 'joined up'. This process has begun in other areas of the UK and in the Republic of Ireland – the opportunity exists in NI.

Alternatives:	• 'Do Nothing' - this option would mean heritage would continue to be marginalised. Currently policy on heritage has been somewhat sidelined, seen as a 'nice to have'. With its steady decline, apathy has set in. This is reflected not just in squeezed budgets but in the separateness of heritage from central capital investment, an 'add on', acquiring a 'niceness', thinking 'it will always be there'. This needs to change to keep heritage assets relevant and requires Policy to direct it.
Selection:	Using heritage assets to contribute to Programme for Government including the Wellbeing Framework: Stronger Economy, Better Homes, Healthier Lives and Brighter Futures • This is an important cornerstone of HE Policy. This aim encourages and stimulates collaboration across government to maximise the potential synergies between heritage and wider government targets – benefitting both. • The Northern Ireland Programme for Government (PfG)³⁰⁵, is focused upon '<i>doing what matters most today</i>'. It sets out nine priorities with the '<i>goal of improving the wellbeing of everyone living and working here</i>' and striving '<i>to make sure that everyone has the best possible opportunity.</i>' Heritage has potential to become an important tool in '<i>..making this</i>

³⁰⁴ [The Protocol for the Care of the Government Estate](#)

³⁰⁵ [Programme for Government 2024-2027 'Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most' - Documents | The Northern Ireland Executive](#)

	<i>a more vibrant and inclusive place to live, work, invest and visit..’ or ‘...innovative approaches to a new housing supply..’, or ‘...creating a fair and inclusive society where everyone flourishes, no one is left behind, and everyone is made to feel welcome..’.</i> These are all benefits³⁰⁶ to be gained from a cared for and accessible historic environment. They will need strong partnerships and collaboration if this potential is to be fully realised. • Use of heritage assets has strong potential to contribute to Programme for Government outcomes including the Wellbeing Framework: Stronger Economy, Better Homes, Healthier Lives and Brighter Futures. • Existing vacant buildings are ‘stranded assets’ amid existing communities. Usually already supported by existing infrastructure, there are many success stories to draw upon - re-using former government institutions for culture or community use, educating children through access to state care monuments, caring for protected historic monuments on farmland which are an important repository of biodiversity and of carbon capture on peatland, or looking after quality places like coasts, harbours , parks and gardens are examples of how heritage can and does contribute towards government wide objectives like the need to be healthy, provide employment opportunities and support the tourism economy. • Showing leadership by investing in and showcasing examples for care and use/re-use of heritage throughout government creates opportunity to bring heritage buildings back into the mainstream, bring cultural heritage into decision-making as a pillar of sustainable development, creating employment and safeguarding good places which have wider benefits for people now and in the future. • HE Policy will be a guide for the leading of government through the Protocol for the Government Estate, having a positive effect for the historic environment and therefore people and places. • Financial mechanisms (e.g. grants, tax reliefs, green finance) could create partnerships between parts of government to incentivize climate-resilient heritage management, and re-use/adaptation to mitigate against carbon expenditure. • HE Policy can emphasise interdepartmental and cross-sectoral collaboration, especially with planning, infrastructure, and agriculture, to embed heritage in broader social, economic and climate action.
Potential for Monitoring: HEADLINE METRICS	SAFER COMMUNITIES/BETTER HOMES • New Stat - Number of Community Asset Transfers that are Heritage Buildings New Stat - Percentage of new social housing units delivered in existing buildings • New Stat - Number of Heritage at Risk Sites in High Streets • No of heritage assets in the government historic estate (Protocol for the Care of the Government’s Historic Estate).
Potential for Monitoring:	• No of listed buildings in the government historic estate.

³⁰⁶ [CULTURE AND HERITAGE CAPITAL: MONETISING THE IMPACT OF CULTURE AND HERITAGE ON HEALTH AND WELLBEING](#)

SUPPORTING METRICS	• no of scheduled monuments in the government historic estate as provided by departments • no of monuments on the sites and monuments register in the gov estate as provided by departments • No of unlisted buildings of historic importance in the government historic estate. • No of pre 1919 homes in Northern Ireland (NIHE NI house condition survey) • No of Industrial heritage and historic parks and gardens • No of defence heritage sites in the government historic estate. • Local councils own a large number of heritage assets too, but these are not currently recorded or reported on.		
Effects on SEA Objectives:	Material Assets	++	Government-led reuse strengthens long-term care and reintegrates heritage assets into communities.
	Landscape	++	Maximising the potential synergies between heritage and wider government targets protects landscape character and scenic value.
	Population / Health	++	Alignment with wider government actions improves wellbeing and life opportunities.
	Climatic Factors	+	Conservation and reuse support net-zero by avoiding demolition and reducing carbon
	Biodiversity, Flora, Fauna	+	Conservation aligns with habitat and green-space protection
	Air, Water and Soil	?	More visitors may increase travel-related impacts, though these can be managed through planning controls (e.g. SPPS).
	Cultural Heritage	++	Embedding heritage in government outcomes elevates its role in sustainable development.

8.5.2 Policy Aim 14: Collaborating with others to magnify an evidence base for the catalytic effect of heritage investment

- **Existing Baseline:** The DfC Historic environment website reports that: *‘Significant funds are invested in the historic environment every year in Northern Ireland³⁰⁷. This sustains jobs, skills and knowledge.*

In 2012 research³⁰⁸ was published in this area which established that:

- *NI historic environment generated circa £532 million of output per annum, created/sustained a total of circa 10,000 FTE jobs and generated circa £250million of Gross Value Add each year*
- *in NI, the historic environment accounted for three jobs per thousand of the population compared to 8.1 in the Republic of Ireland and 11.8 in Scotland*
- *if the NI sector could perform at an equivalent rate to Scotland, it could generate £1.5 billion annually and support 20,000 jobs i.e. three times its 2012 output and twice as many jobs*

Economic impact from heritage is not just a result of tourism. It also helps to deliver places where people want to live and businesses want to locate; it can provide an environment that helps to nurture business growth and attract new business and create jobs. However, further statistics easily available on tourism are published on page 39 of the document ‘NI Heritage Statistics as recorded on 31 March 2019³⁰⁹’ which help to illustrate that some of the potential indicated in 2012 has been realised in the intervening period.’

- In the listed building owners survey³¹⁰, when asked for obstacles preventing maintenance, lack of government funding to meet higher maintenance costs was the most cited obstacle, with 77% of respondents who declared at least one obstacle stating it. 75% of respondents said funding/tax breaks would help encourage them to maintain.
- When asked to state obstacles preventing maintenance 19% of respondents held a view that their listed buildings worth does not justify the cost of investing in it.

³⁰⁷ [The value of the Historic Environment | Department for Communities](#)

³⁰⁸ [Study of the economic value of Northern Ireland's historic environment | Department for Communities](#)

³⁰⁹ [NI Heritage Statistics as recorded on 31 March 2019’](#)

³¹⁰ [Listed Buildings Survey; Scheduled Historic Monuments Survey](#)

³¹¹ [Market Failure Analysis of the Heritage Sector in Northern Ireland](#)

- In the scheduled monument owners survey³¹², when asked about obstacles preventing owners doing more to look after their monument, 40% said that there is no financial benefit, and 34% of respondents said that the effort and cost is not justified. When asked what would assist you in managing or carrying out repairs to your monuments, 70% of respondents said grant funding.
- Data on how the historic environment can meet social, economic, cultural and environmental needs has been recorded in other jurisdictions in the UK and in the ROI but though statistical information and case studies have been collated in the past³¹³, no such recent data exists for NI to allow a comparable calculation.
- The ‘Market Failure’³¹⁴ seen across NI is not as widespread elsewhere in the UK - existing but less densely and in a different context. NI is unique in its need and how the historic environment can meet its unique needs. Data on how heritage delivers does exist³¹⁵, however it does not exist sufficiently to fully measure impacts, nor do the necessary statistics exist to monitor its progress in delivering it in Northern Ireland.
- Historic Buildings contribute to a low-carbon, circular economy³¹⁶, however no NI specific data is available to understand this potential.
- Heritage places are one of the biggest draws to Northern Ireland for Tourists. No studies have yet been carried out to demonstrate how investing in maintaining heritage could result in higher numbers of visitors. In the nations Brand Index 2025, Northern Ireland’s top two Attributes were ‘Natural Beauty’ (20th out of 50) and ‘Environment’ (21st). Since 2016, all 23 Attribute scores for Northern Ireland have shown improvement. The most notable increases were in respondents’ willingness to ‘work and live’ in Northern Ireland (+0.35) and perceptions of Northern Ireland as being ‘rich in historic buildings’ (+0.29). In terms of ranking, ‘historic buildings’ (along with ‘natural beauty’) achieved the largest improvement, each rising three places.³¹⁷
- The UK ‘Monetising the Impact of Culture and Heritage on Wellbeing’³¹⁸ study concludes that the general health benefits associated with culture and heritage engagement in adults aged 30-49 alone equated to £8.08bn.

Environmental Problems:

- Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) and the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes, used to give an indication of emerging trends and the strength of the UK economy do not recognise the heritage sector in all its genres/activities, therefore it is largely invisible.
- The Historic environment is not meeting its potential to support the economic, cultural and environmental needs specific to people in Northern Ireland because this potential is not fully understood in the context of NI’s unique circumstances.

³¹² [Scheduled Historic Monuments Survey](#)

³¹³ [Heritage Delivers | Treasure the Past, Enrich the Future](#)

³¹⁴ [Market Failure Analysis of the Heritage Sector in Northern Ireland](#)

³¹⁵ [Heritage Delivers | Treasure the Past, Enrich the Future](#)

³¹⁶ [Heritage in a Circular Economy | Heritage Counts | Historic England](#)

³¹⁷ [Nation Brands Index | The Executive Office](#)

³¹⁸ [CULTURE AND HERITAGE CAPITAL: MONETISING THE IMPACT OF CULTURE AND HERITAGE ON HEALTH AND WELLBEING](#)

- Whilst designated Heritage assets are also risk due to market failure (see above), undesignated assets are at exacerbated risk of market failure due to lack of regulation (see also CAMSAR³¹⁹ Report findings); 16,062 Historic buildings worthy of recording are included on the NI Buildings database – this means that circa 7,000 heritage assets were worthy of survey and are recorded but fell short of being of ‘special interest’, but since 2015, no councils in NI have used their powers to create ‘local lists’ of heritage assets as part of the development of Local Development Plans which include a review of Conservation Areas, ATCs and AVCs. This is a loss of potential.
- *‘Funding challenges across recent years have been compounded by the impacts of COVID, the impact of high inflation on costs and the pressure on the disposable incomes of users. Decisions made in terms of public funding to the historic environment sector have been a regrettable consequence of the need to prioritise.’³²⁰*

Alternatives:	• Do-nothing/Business as Usual – Up to date information is required to understand fully the economic contribution of the Historic Environment particular to NI. Currently, this data is lacking, and therefore though the ‘Conservation deficit’ is understood and research confirms that it exists for NI, data about the inverse (how investment in heritage has dividends which may be non-monetary) is not yet understood for NI. Examples like the ‘House of Good³²¹’ and ‘Green Book Social Value Model³²²’ exist which offer some potential to consider the benefits of investment in heritage, but at the moment the methodology is not user friendly, applies to specific building types or projects and/or is not universally accessible.
Selection:	• Collaborating with others to magnify an evidence base for the catalytic effects of heritage investment • <i>‘Quality, cared for historic landmarks that are integral to places and communities are the visible signs of valuing and investment in communities. The restoration and re-use of historic buildings and places for commercial and community or creative-use is not only popular but offers significant wealth-generation potential and has been at the heart of some of the most successful culture-led regeneration projects.’³²³</i> • Through a more thorough understanding of how heritage assets act as springboards to stimulate positive social, economic and environmental impacts, an overarching HE Policy can capitalise on how investment can realise those impacts. When the added value - advantages like better health, opportunities for learning, cross-sectoral skills and employment, regeneration and community value - are measurable and direct, investing in NI’s historic environment will more visibly make common sense.

³¹⁹ [CAMSAR_Report.pdf](#)

³²⁰ From HCC Framework – check ref later

³²¹ [The House of Good | National Churches Trust](#)

³²² [Guide-to-using-the-Social-Value-Model-Edn-1.1-3-Dec-20.pdf](#)

³²³ The Heritage Alliance – Heritage Creates - [Layout 1](#)

	- Government is best placed through Policy to collaborate with others to collect and measure evidence, putting solid proof forward to achieve this aim. Policy of measuring and monitoring could demonstrate that our historic environment is of value to us all - delivering for, the planet, for peace, and for places. But most of all, delivering for people. Understanding more fully the situation of the Historic Environment particular to NI will be the first step to further HE Policy aims which support activity to: - collaborate with others to create and strengthen an evidence base to magnify the catalytic effect of heritage investment and monitor it for growth. - collaborate with others to create and strengthen understanding of the wellbeing, quality of life and social values which can be acquired using the historic environment. - showcase, promoting and marketing our unique historic environment locally and internationally - maximise the role of councils, community or voluntary groups, voluntary organisations and individuals in the promotion, protection and enjoyment of their heritage assets. - Create evidence to show how much the historic environment quantifiably contributes to circular economy emphasises the use of renewable, non-toxic, non-polluting and biodegradable materials with the least life-cycle impacts. 'Private investment in the historic environment can be profitable – the 'heritage premium'³²⁴ is a true economic tool which can generate wealth – one where we can all enjoy the benefits.		
Potential for Monitoring: HEADLINE METRICS	- New Stat - SIC and SOC CODES – the contribution of the Heritage Sector to NI and UK Economy - NUMBER AND TREND (% annual increase or decrease) (DfE?) - New Stat - Average Leverage for Listed Building Grant scheme - for every £ invested - generates X and saves X - New Stat - HED Support for repairs in pounds (NIESR TABLE DfC Historic Environment Fund) - expressed as a future saving amount paid forward through maintenance as a % - spending X saves Y		
Potential for Monitoring: SUPPORTING METRICS	- No. heritage assets supported per year – Rural/Urban breakdown - New Stat - Archaeology 2030 - % of action points on 'Green'		
Effects on SEA Objectives:	Material Assets	++	Strong evidence-building supports sustainable reuse of buildings and infrastructure, encourages use of traditional materials, tackles neglect, and promotes reuse as climate action

³²⁴ Investing in heritage is not just an investment in heritage but part of a strategic move that can directly influence local economic outcomes. As businesses set up in distinctive, historic buildings, they benefit from the competitive advantages that the heritage brings, attracting people and investments to place, boosting the local economy. [Heritage and its Role in Development | Heritage Counts | Historic England](#)

	Landscape	++	A stronger evidence base reinforces protection of landscape character, distinctiveness and scenic value.
	Population / Health	++	Improved understanding of heritage value increases access, community participation, and enjoyment—enhancing wellbeing and quality of life.
	Climatic Factors	+	Evidence supports reuse as a low-carbon alternative, reducing emissions and improving climate adaptation.
	Biodiversity, Flora, Fauna	+	Positive heritage evidence complements actions that protect habitats and natural spaces.
	Air, Water and Soil	?	More visitors may increase travel-related impacts, though these can be managed through planning controls (e.g. SPPS).
	Cultural Heritage	++	Evidence gathering strengthens safeguarding of designated, undesignated and at-risk heritage assets.

8.5.3 Policy Aim 15: - Driving innovation and enterprise in the historic environment sector towards research, new technologies and new ways of working

Existing Baseline:

- Though there are numerous projects exploring technology and innovation around the historic environment ongoing, information about these is piecemeal. A publication ‘Heritage Delivers’³²⁵ was first published in 2020 as ‘Heritage Statistics at 31 March 2020’ and has been fully revised and published as ‘Heritage Delivers 2026’³²⁶ by the NI Historic Environment Stakeholder Group.
- There is little information publicly available on higher education research analysis, new technologies and digital development in the Historic Environment for Northern Ireland, though a ‘Heritage Hub’ exists at Queens University³²⁷ and a page representing a place marker for this data for the University of Ulster also exists³²⁸.

Environmental Problems:

- As above – this field is largely invisible in NI, and therefore it is difficult to measure / visualise the potential which can be seen elsewhere – for example in England³²⁹, Scotland³³⁰, Wales³³¹ and the Republic of Ireland³³².

Alternatives:	• Do-nothing/Business as Usual – There is already innovative examples of work going on in the heritage sector which as the potential to help the historic environment, but also to help others who wish to use, understand or better access it. For example: ○ LIDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) and photogrammetry surveys, used to locate buried archeology can help to locate and avoid potentially important archaeology in development sites without having to dig (saving time and money on excavations). ○ GIS, remote sensing, or predictive modelling of heritage assets and their settings could support climate resilience planning
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³²⁵ [Data, evidence and research | Heritage Delivers](#)

³²⁶ [NI HERITAGE DELIVERS 2026 CASE STUDIES AND STATISTICS ON HOW HERITAGE BENEFITS NORTHERN IRELAND | Heritage Delivers](#)

³²⁷ [Heritage Hub | Heritage Hub](#)

³²⁸ [Heritage and Museum Studies Research - Ulster University](#)

³²⁹ [Research: Historic England's Research Findings for the Built, Archaeological and Marine Historic Environment | Historic England](#)

³³⁰ [Archives and Research | Historic Environment Scotland](#)

³³¹ [Research | Cadw](#)

³³² [Research & Data | Our Projects & Programmes | The Heritage Council](#)

	○ In the route to net-zero, re-use of buildings and structures means that access to existing plans and details can be the starting point for computer modelling (saving time and money on surveys). ○ The development of the internet has revolutionised the potential for research. ○ However, there is little visibility or access to this research, meaning that the opportunity to use, promote or understand the gaps is not there at present, and would remain so without an overarching oversight which could connect this information across a wide range of groups/interested parties.
Selection:	Driving innovation and enterprise in the historic environment sector towards research, new technologies and new ways of working To meet this aim HE Policy can support innovative ideas to capitalise on and expand on the use of a wealth of knowledge. • New research and digital records could mean better understanding, achieved through improved access for everyone to analysis, archives, artefacts, museum collections and other heritage records (bringing new information to light). • Digital does not mean exclusive to researchers or academics. Contemporary presentation and interpretation of heritage could include the better use of technology (bringing heritage to new audiences). For example: <i>The HEARTH project at the Rural Community Network is funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and aims to amplify rural heritage and rural communities. Rural communities right across Northern Ireland are supported through networking events, one on one support sessions, a Community Development skills programme and a Heritage Skills Programme throughout the two years of the project. We are running a Digital Folklore, Stories and Mapping ...We were inundated with signups, but we are aware that there is a real desire for training and support around oral history recording right across Northern Ireland in rural areas. We often hear community groups say they are afraid of stories, folklore, traditions being lost if they aren't recorded and protected. This programme is aimed at placing these digital skills right in the heart of rural areas.</i> Emma McAleer, Rural Community Network • Having access to information about the historic environment doesn't mean looking backwards. In the future, access to archives will save time and money – for example within the growth and development of our historic towns and cities. • HE Policy can support re-use/meanwhile use/re-visioning, exploring the potential for innovative uses- potentially marketing to the youth and cultural/ creative sectors with potential for targeted outcomes relating to social value and peacebuilding through shared spaces for innovation
Potential for Monitoring: HEADLINE METRICS	BRIGHTER FUTURES – • New Stat - Number of HEF Research and Innovation Projects Supported • *Number of Higher Education PhDs in Heritage related subjects
Potential for Monitoring:	• New Stat.. Investment in research on the specific climate change challenges and opportunities for heritage assets

SUPPORTING METRICS			
Effects on SEA Objectives:	Material Assets	++	Innovation significantly improves sustainable reuse of buildings/infrastructure, supports traditional materials, tackles neglect, and enables climate-positive reuse.
	Landscape	++	New technologies strongly enhance protection of landscape character, distinctiveness and scenic value.
	Population / Health	+	Innovation improves access, understanding and engagement, strengthening quality of place and community wellbeing.
	Climatic Factors	+	Innovation improves access, understanding and engagement, strengthening quality of place and community wellbeing.
	Biodiversity, Flora, Fauna	+	Innovative approaches complement and support wider biodiversity protection
	Air, Soil and Water	+	Minimal direct impact, with potential benefits for marine and environmental research.
	Cultural Heritage	++	Innovation greatly strengthens the safeguarding of designated, undesignated and at-risk heritage assets.

9 Transboundary considerations

Existing Baseline

- DfC's Historic Environment Division recently confirmed support for the joint UK and Ireland Research Agenda for Climate Change and Heritage led by Historic England. DfC will continue to work with our sister organisations and wider partners to ensure that the value of our heritage can be realised, that the effects of climate change can be fully understood and that our heritage is protected for future generations to enjoy
- Memoranda of Understanding exist between Northern Ireland Government and Republic of Ireland Government on the Historic Environment with regard to Heritage Skills, Climate Change and Vernacular Architecture.
- These MOUs form the basis of transboundary shared research and strategies targeted at climate change impacts and a shared need to protect often undesignated vernacular heritage buildings and landscapes.
- Currently, Shared-Island funding and the sharing of ideas is limited to larger scale government initiatives. Positively, these relate for example to the exploration of an All-Island Heritage Skills Centre for Heritage, and for example funding for a writer's centre at Bellaghy Bawn, a State Care Site.
- Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council have been awarded a 'Heritage Places' grant, from the National Lottery heritage Fund, to promote, celebrate and use heritage to deliver for this council area.
- HED works with DCMS, Historic Scotland and Cadw informally, meeting quarterly.
- In reality, cross border co-operation and partnership for heritage organisations is much broader – for example through the Irish Landmark Trust, all Ireland ecclesiastical dioceses, or the Commissioner for Irish Lights.
- HED and colleagues from ROI in the Department of Heritage, Local Government and Housing (DHLGH) meet regularly over matters like Shared Island funding, marine and coastal shared issues and cross-border initiatives as well as designation and research.
- Cross-border infrastructure projects (either planned, under construction or completed) have potential to improve links/tourism to heritage assets.
- At Gracehill a transboundary partnership outside of the UK or Ireland has been nurtured between Moravian Church sites in Germany, Denmark and the United States, A formal management group has been set up for the Transnational World Heritage Site with regular meetings held.

- DfC has also engaged with the United States on the US250 celebrations, highlighting the involvement of people from here printing and signing the Declaration of Independence. It is also engaging with Normandy as they develop the Year of the Normans across the UK, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands and Norway for 2027.

Environmental Problems

- Northern Ireland links to other regions of the UK and other countries can appear politicised. Unlike other parts of the UK, NI's cultural 'identity' is nuanced, making connections to other places more politically sensitive than elsewhere.
- Philanthropic funding from countries with connections to Northern Ireland such as the USA tend to be channelled through the Republic of Ireland and not directly associated with NI, which can be politically sensitive.
- There can be capacity problems with grasping the potential of philanthropic funding. For example, DfC is aware of a thatched building that, following a meeting in the USA, was highlighted as a traditional homestead associated with a particular family name and regularly receives visitors as a result. But it also faces maintenance problems that are beyond the capacity of the owner which may call its future into doubt.
- During engagement, councils reported that they had no mechanism to accept and lacked the skills in-house to manage philanthropic funding, even when it was offered.
- Central 'block' funding from the UK government to Northern Ireland which is awarded to reflect investment in Heritage in England is not protected – the block grant allocated to Northern Ireland is dispersed to government departments based upon the agreed priorities of the NI Executive.

Transboundary considerations				
Other plan/programme or strategy	Legislative basis, environmental objectives or requirements of the plan or programme	How objectives and requirements of other plans or programmes might be taken on board in Historic Environment Policy (HE Policy) or how HE Policy might impact other plans, policies or programmes	Impacts on HE Policy	HE Policy may impact outcomes

National Heritage Plan (Heritage Ireland 2030³³³)	<i>Heritage Ireland 2030 is Ireland's new national heritage plan. It is built around a vision of [Ireland's] heritage – in all its forms – being at very centre of local and national discourse, valued by all and cared for and protected for future generations.</i> <i>At the heart of this framework are three themes: communities, leadership and partnerships. These themes reflect the importance of ongoing collaboration between government and communities, heritage organisations, individuals and local authorities in caring and planning for our shared heritage.</i> <i>A key strand of this Plan is the 'Shared Island Approach', with the objective of '.,maintaining and developing strong all-island partnerships in implementing all aspects of the Heritage 2030 framework including by:</i> <i>• working with the Northern Ireland Executive and through the North South Ministerial Council to develop and deepen ... cooperation.</i> <i>• supporting heritage through relevant areas under the auspices of the North South Ministerial Council, co-funding and supporting Waterways Ireland and The Loughs Agency as all-island bodies with important remits in the care of heritage;</i> <i>• maintaining and developing cross-border agency partnerships including through the National Parks and Wildlife Service and National Biodiversity Data Centre; and</i>	Historic Environment Policy will provide high level advice on Government's attitude to the historic environment. This includes our shared objective to partner with the Republic of Ireland through transboundary co-operation and shared investment. HE Policy aims will support and enhance partnerships to better understand, share and protect shared heritage assets and landscapes their inter-related histories, settings and users.		
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³³³ [Heritage Ireland 2030](#)

National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP)(ROI – 2023-27)³³⁴	• <i>supporting cross-border Local Authority cooperation and all-island civil society initiatives on shared biodiversity and heritage concerns.'</i> National datasets are available for archaeology and architectural heritage: the National Monuments Service Archaeological Survey Database; and National Inventory of Architectural Heritage.			
	<i>Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP) sets the national biodiversity agenda for the period 2023-2030 and aims to deliver the transformative changes required to the ways in which we value and protect nature.</i> The 4th NBAP has 5 main objectives: • <i>Objective 1 - Adopt a Whole of Government, Whole of Society Approach to Biodiversity</i> • <i>Objective 2 - Meet Urgent Conservation and Restoration Needs</i> • <i>Objective 3 - Secure Nature's Contribution to People</i> • <i>Objective 4 - Enhance the Evidence Base for Action on Biodiversity</i> • <i>Objective 5 - Strengthen Ireland's Contribution to <u>International Biodiversity Initiatives</u></i>	Historic Environment Policy will provide high level advice on Government's attitude to the historic environment. This includes our shared objective to partner with the Republic of Ireland through transboundary co-operation and shared investment. HE Policy aims will support ROI's NBAP objective to strengthen international biodiversity initiatives – in particular through the protection of landscapes and the opportunity to protect and create opportunities biodiversity within the settings of heritage assets and historic parks and gardens.	✓	

³³⁴ [Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023–2030](#)

Legislation – Planning and Development Act 2000 (including the Record of Protected Structures) And National Monuments Act (1930-2014) (including the Register of Historic Monuments and the Sites and Monuments Record)	Comparable to the ‘List’ of buildings and the Schedule of Historic Monuments, ROI has legislation and policy in place to designate and protect buildings and monuments of significance. National datasets are available for archaeology and architectural heritage: the National Monuments Service Archaeological Survey Database; and National Inventory of Architectural Heritage	These protected assets share attributes, have a shared history, share material sources (locally quarried stone, etc) architectural features, and architects with those in NI. In the border regions assets are set amongst shared landscapes, often within sight of each other. As people live across borders, to understand, conserve protect and enhance heritage assets and landscapes in NI contributes to the benefits for people in the ROI and vice versa.		
Creative Ireland Programme³³⁵ – Pillar 2- Enabling Creativity in Every community	The Creative Ireland Programme encourages community-led heritage projects, and supports storytelling, cultural events and local heritage interpretation.	History and traditions are shared across borders – meaning that the benefits of public participation in heritage activity and the protection of local heritage sites and traditions in the ROI will benefit people living in Northern Ireland, and vice versa. HE Policy will support and compliment the objectives of the Creative Ireland Programme.		

³³⁵ [Our Programme - Creative Ireland Programme](#)

The Heritage Council ³³⁶	The Heritage Council in an independent Statutory body advising the ROI Government on heritage. The Heritage Council supports local authority heritage officers, runs grant schemes for built, natural and intangible heritage and Ireland's Heritage Open Days. It also support the Discovery Programme, a Centre for Archaeology and Innovation in Ireland.	HE Policy will support the shared benefits of a network of Heritage Officers working across ROI and NI to share advice, research, resources and information for everyone's benefit. It shares the objective of the Heritage Council to have a dedicated Heritage Spokesperson in place at a local level to advocate for heritage, and to support research and innovation in the heritage sector to advance our shared understanding.		
MOUs	Memoranda of Understanding exist between Northern Ireland Government and Republic of Ireland Government on the Historic Environment with regard to Climate Change and Vernacular Architecture	These MOUs form the basis of transboundary shared research and strategies targeted at climate change impacts and a shared need to protect often undesignated vernacular heritage buildings and landscapes. In reality, cross border co-operation and partnership for heritage organisations is much broader – for example through the Irish Landmark Trust, all Ireland ecclesiastical dioceses, or the Commissioner for Irish Lights. HED and colleagues from ROI in the Department of Heritage, Local Government and Housing (DHLGH) meet regularly over matters like Shared Island funding, marine and coastal shared issues and cross-border initiatives as well as designation and research.		
Scotland: Our Place In Time ³³⁷ and 'Our Past, Our Future' ³³⁸ - Historic	<i>Led by Historic Environment Scotland, this strategy was created following a public consultation, in collaboration with 10 organisations representing Scotland's heritage sector including the Scottish Government, to create a new national strategy for those working in the public sector and beyond.</i>	HE Policy will support the shared benefits of a network of partners working across the UK and NI to share advice, research, resources and information for everyone's benefit.		

³³⁶ [The Heritage Council](#)

³³⁷ [Our Place in Time: the Historic Environment Strategy for Scotland - gov.scot](#)

³³⁸ v

Environment Strategy for Scotland	<i>The strategy, which builds on the previous strategy ‘Our Place in Time’, is intended to provide a roadmap for the next five years and highlights the sector’s shared ambition to make a responsible contribution to Scotland’s economy and use the historic environment to improve people’s wellbeing. It also has a strong focus on the transition to net zero alongside a forward-looking ambition to empower communities and build a wellbeing economy.</i> <i>Scotland’s historic environment plays a key role in the country’s economy, sustaining 68,000 full-time equivalent jobs and generating £4.4 billion per year pre-COVID pandemic. These numbers are expected to increase by an estimated 10,000 new jobs over the next decade to maintain and adapt Scotland’s traditional building stock.</i> <i>The strategy also sets out the goal of further retrofitting and putting Scotland’s traditional buildings back into use; estimates put these buildings at representing 19% of Scotland’s housing stock, 33% of retail space, and almost 50% of spaces used by the public sector.</i>			
England – DCMS’ International Cultural heritage protection programme³³⁹ and	<i>Since 2015 the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has worked with partners including the British Council, the Arts and Humanities Research Council, UNESCO, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Victoria and Albert Museum and the British Museum to deliver cultural heritage projects in ODA</i>	HE Policy will support the shared benefits of a network of partners working across the UK and NI to share advice, research, resources and information for everyone’s benefit.		

³³⁹ [DCMS's International Cultural Heritage Protection Programme - GOV.UK](#)

Historic England Future Strategy³⁴⁰	<i>eligible countries across the Middle East, North Africa, East Africa, Southeast Asia and Eastern Europe.</i> <i>In addition to promoting economic development, culture plays a role in peacebuilding, security and stability, as well as building resilience to crises in fragile and conflict-affected States. This highlights the vital role that protecting culture and cultural heritage plays in the UK's international development agenda.</i> <i>Objectives</i> <i>Through a portfolio of delivery partners, the International Cultural Heritage Protection (ICHP) Programme works across 4 integrated themes to ensure the protection of cultural heritage: conflict and security, climate change, serious and organised crime, and research.</i> <i>[The] Vision at Historic England - 'Championing Heritage - Improving Lives' is for a heritage that is valued, celebrated and shared by everyone. Our Future Strategy, which started in 2021, is about how [they] will make that Vision a reality.</i>			
Wales	Though the Welsh Government does not have a published Historic Environment Strategy: <i>'As the Welsh Government's historic environment service, Cadw is aptly named. The Welsh verb cadw means "protect", "keep" or "preserve", and that's exactly what the organisation does. Its mission is to look after the nation's heritage sites – helping visitors enjoy them now, and ensuring they can endure for generations to come. In a</i>	HE Policy will support the shared benefits of a network of partners working across the UK and NI to share advice, research, resources and information for everyone's benefit.		

³⁴⁰ [Historic England Future Strategy | Historic England](#)

	<i>nation reputed to have more castles per square mile than any other, it's a big task.</i> <i>Cadw's broader vision is to help create a Wales where heritage sites are cared for, understood and shared by everyone. It's a recognition of the vital role these places play in the Welsh cultural identity, providing a living link to our common history.'</i>			
USA 250³⁴¹	USA 250 is an example of international heritage connections between the USA and NI. NI has '<i>.. always had strong cultural and historical bonds with the United States with early settlers from Northern Ireland playing a significant role in communities across the US.'</i>	HE Policy will support the shared benefits of a network of partners working globally across heritage networks; information sharing, sharing research and connections to people who also value their own place brings benefits to local heritage in NI.		✓
Year of the Normans – a European Cultural Trail³⁴²	The Regional Council of Normandy has invited stakeholders from Normandy, France, the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands, Ireland, regions of Southern Italy, Flanders, Norway and Denmark to respond to this call to create the programme for a major one-year event. This is an example of how transboundary common heritage connections which stretch beyond borders can have a positive effect on how NI values and understands its past and present historic environment.	HE Policy will support the shared benefits of a network of partners working across European heritage networks; information sharing, sharing research and creating connections to people who also value their own place brings benefits to local heritage in NI.		✓

³⁴¹ [Minister Lyons announces £250,000 for America 250 celebrations | Department for Communities](#)

³⁴² [2027, European Year of the Normans | Région Normandie](#)

9.1.1 Policy Aim 16: Embedding transboundary and international cooperation into the historic environment sector

Alternatives:	• Do-nothing/Business as Usual – Northern Ireland’s heritage is of interest to us but also to the world. For example, the small Moravian village of Gracehill in Co Antrim, Northern Ireland was designated as a Transboundary World Heritage Site on Friday 26th July 2024. Similarly, Vernacular heritage traditions are also part of a shared culture of building that is found throughout the world. Thus, our vernacular heritage reflects the creativity of our forebears, provides a link with the past and is worthy of global interest. • In fact, Northern Ireland shares historic links with many parts of these islands and the world – like the Ulster Scots traditions in Scotland, the Anglo-Norman English who built many of our castles to the Republic of Ireland with whom we share many archaeological similarities and vernacular traditions, the Moravians in Germany and America demonstrated at the Transboundary World Heritage site in Gracehill, links to the Vikings in Northern Europe,. Maximising philanthropic interest can mean the sharing of knowledge across borders on shared heritage as well as advice, support, resources, people and funds. To ‘do-nothing’ would not take advantage of this potential.
Selection:	Broadening transboundary and international cooperation with the historic environment sector • Our historic environment has value to people in Northern Ireland, but it also has wider shared island, pan-UK and in fact transboundary significance – it has global value. To achieve this aim, HE Policy can recognise that having been shaped by globally important historic events, NI’s historic environment offers opportunities to relate with others internationally who feel connected to us. • Now and in the future, high-level Policy can work to boost international and cross-boundary partnerships that amplify and help us to see the unique value of our historic environment from a global perspective. This work will underpin a vision to conserve, protect and enhance the Northern Ireland historic environment for future generations – and people everywhere.
Potential for Monitoring: HEADLINE METRICS	GLOBAL CONNECTIONS • ROI/NI and UK/NI Transboundary World Heritage Bids • International Funding - All Island/Shared Island Funding/UK equivalent/DfC • Heritage Tourism Jobs in NI (NISRA NI Visitor attraction survey) - NUMBER AND TREND (% annual increase or decrease) (NISRA)
Potential for Monitoring: SUPPORTING METRICS	• Number of Transboundary/World heritage sites • Number of visitors to World Heritage sites

Effects on SEA Objectives:	Material Assets	++	International cooperation strengthens material assets through shared expertise, advice, and potential financial support.
	Landscape	++	Cross-border cooperation enhances protection of landscape character and scenic value across interconnected land- and seascapes.
	Population / Health	++	Global collaboration inspires learning, enjoyment and wellbeing by connecting people to shared heritage and landscapes.
	Climatic Factors	+	Exchanging knowledge internationally improves understanding of climate impacts and adaptation approaches.
	Biodiversity, Flora, Fauna	+	Collaboration supports shared learning on biodiversity and habitats, especially where ecological systems span regions.
	Air, Soil and Water	+	Limited direct effects, with positive potential through joint marine and coastal environmental initiatives.
	Cultural Heritage	++	Strongly positive for cultural heritage through shared histories, deeper international understanding, and peace-building benefits.

9.1.2 Policy Aim 17: Proudly showcasing, promoting and marketing our unique historic environment

Existing Baseline:

- *‘Representing 40% of the visitor market, cultural tourism is taken increasingly seriously by cities and regions the world over. It delivers rich and memorable experiences. It triggers the imagination. It connects visitors with the landscape and the heritage, art and ideas of the host community. It builds up a story of a place, where it has come from and where it is going. It creates compelling destinations, known for what they stand for as well as what they offer’.*³⁴³
- In the Owners’ Survey³⁴⁴ a very high proportion of respondents (84%) said that their listed building is important or very important to the character of their local area. Furthermore, 60% said that their listed building is important or very important to the appeal of their local area to tourists and 45% said the same about investment in their local area.
- In the Monument Owners’ Survey³⁴⁵ 40% of Monument owners felt there were advantages to owning a monument. Of these respondents, just under 90% reported that feeling part of history or heritage was one advantage, whilst over 60% said that advantages included a sense of pride/feel good factor or the scheduled monument provided a local landmark/local community value.
- In the nations Brand Index 2025, Northern Ireland’s top two Attributes were ‘Natural Beauty’ (20th out of 50) and ‘Environment’ (21st). Since 2016, all 23 Attribute scores for Northern Ireland have shown improvement. The most notable increases were in respondents’ willingness to ‘work and live’ in Northern Ireland (+0.35) and perceptions of Northern Ireland as being ‘rich in historic buildings’ (+0.29). In terms of ranking, ‘historic buildings’ (along with ‘natural beauty’) achieved the largest improvement, each rising three places.³⁴⁶

Environmental problems:

- Funding directed at place-making or tourism is mainly targeted at ‘experience’, it does not currently provide capital to repair and maintain heritage assets which means that their condition is deteriorating as described in section 6.2.1.
- Opportunities are being missed for example to align the care and maintenance of churches with tourism provision; training, mentoring and volunteering is needed, though there is an appetite as demonstrated by the National Churches Trust ‘Treasure Ireland’ project tourism pilot.

³⁴³ NI Culture Heritage and Tourism Leadership Group action plan, CT consultants for TNI, December 2023 p3.

³⁴⁴ [LBOS](#)

³⁴⁵ [MOS](#)

³⁴⁶ [Nation Brands Index | The Executive Office](#)

- There are many privately owned heritage assets – like thatched cottages – which are photogenic and have scenic value, but do not generate sufficient funding to be self-sustaining due to the ‘Conservation Deficit’.³⁴⁷
- Marketing is not considered to be an ‘essential’ for HED, as it is not a statutory function based in legislation. This means that it can be stripped out of budget lines when these become tight. Whilst large heritage bodies and organisations like the National Trust, Historic England and Historic Scotland have invested in a ‘brand’ including highly illustrated websites, merchandise and events co-ordinators, these activities are ‘extras’ and ‘nice to have’ for HED. Principally through tourism, the core business of these organisations is how their country/brand represented something essential about itself to its own people and to visitors; this is currently lacking in HED.

Alternatives:	• Do-nothing/Business as Usual – there are many historic locations, monuments, buildings and places in Northern Ireland such as Conservation Areas, Cultural Landscapes, Council owned historic parks and gardens, etc. which showcase heritage. Relying on individuals to provide heritage assets without support is not financially viable. These assets often sit in isolation and are not part of an overall high-level, targeted, measurable and joined up strategy to showcase heritage in NI. A joined-up overview could maximise the links between showcasing natural and man-made heritage. • Focus on State Care - DfC owns 167 State care monuments, however one fifth need maintenance and several are closed. A State Care Investment Plan has been approved which could maximise the condition, access and use of these buildings but this plan has not yet been funded. State Care assets would contribute to tourism within an ecosystem of care and management, however this is not currently resourced. Heritage assets in good condition all over Northern Ireland would have a wider impact across broader groups of people, contributing further to free and paid for enjoyment of heritage. A strategy to help owners of heritage assets to benefit from tourism would potentially help to make heritage more economically viable, reducing the Conservation deficit and creating a more positive heritage premium.
Selection:	Showcasing, promoting and marketing the our unique historic environment • In Northern Ireland we have quite literally thousands of potential opportunities to showcase, promote and market our historic environment. An opportunity exists to create HE Policy which coordinates caring for and marketing of heritage with tourism – local and international – in one sphere of investment. Good places are good for local people but also bring visitors - recognizing the potential of investment in place-based heritage to contribute to our everyday quality of life but also to tourism and therefore the economy. People who visit heritage sites stay longer and spend more³⁴⁸.
Potential for Monitoring:	• Numbers of Tourism NI visitors % to heritage (Tourism NI) • % top 10 NI visitor attractions are heritage – trend Visitor Attitude Survey (Tourism NI)

³⁴⁷ ‘Conservation deficit - The amount by which the cost of repair (and conversion to optimum viable use if appropriate) of a heritage asset exceeds its market value on completion of repair and conversion, allowing for all appropriate development costs.’ [HEAG](#)

³⁴⁸ Robert Merton Solow, Nobel Prize winning economist, in Licciardi et al, 2012. [Heritage and its Role in Development | Heritage Counts | Historic England](#)

HEADLINE METRICS	Visitor Attraction Survey compiled annually by NISRA shows the rise in popularity of cultural and heritage attractions		
Potential for Monitoring: SUPPORTING METRICS	- Number of Heritage Angels awards (DfC) - Social media stats (DfC/NT/AHF/UAH) - Tourism NI stats on heritage venues, heritage accommodation/holiday lets / heritage events (Tourism NI) - Annual £ - State care investment (DfC) - Annual £ - Council/gov't investment in key heritage buildings (SIB)		
Effects on SEA Objectives:	Material Assets	++	Showcasing heritage strengthens protection, maintenance, reuse and enhancement of historic places and their settings.
	Landscape	++	Increases awareness, appreciation and access, supporting protection of landscape character and scenic value.
	Population / Health	++	Inspires learning, enjoyment and connection to historic places, enhancing wellbeing and community pride.
	Climatic Factors	+	Protecting and retaining assets has climate benefits; local tourism may offset emissions from travel abroad.
	Biodiversity, Flora, Fauna	+	Creates synergies between natural and cultural sites, reinforcing appreciation of NI's unique combined heritage
	Air, Water and Soil	?	Increased visitation may raise traffic impacts; effects uncertain but mitigable through planning controls (e.g. SPPS).
	Cultural Heritage	++	Strongly enhances protection, awareness, appreciation and access, showcasing NI's distinctive culture and landscape.

9.2 Alternatives to an HE Policy

The SEA process considers alternatives. At a strategic level the alternatives considered by the Department were those which concluded that a Policy for the Historic Environment is needed for Northern Ireland. The consideration of these alternatives is outlined in **the table below**.

Table 4 – Alternatives considered to an HE Policy for Northern Ireland

Alternative	Consideration	Decision
Do nothing (business as usual)	In 2025 the Condition Survey of Listed Buildings³⁴⁹ was published indicating a decline by 24% in the condition of buildings in 20 years (having doubled in a decade). Heritage at Risk figures in Northern Ireland show a doubling of vacant heritage buildings since 2018³⁵⁰. This demonstrates a need for action to protect the historic environment from further decline. Research³⁵¹ in other jurisdictions (UK, ROI) tells us that cared for heritage places and assets can have a positive effect on people's lives for example through enjoyment of, employment, improved wellbeing, quality environments, pride of place and community cohesion. Research³⁵² also shows that re-using buildings could offer an opportunity in NI to mitigate against climate change, saving carbon when compared with new build. This, combined with a need in NI for housing, demonstrates a need to consider the	There has never been an HE Policy in Northern Ireland. However, the current problems for the Historic Environment in Northern Ireland, combined with the missed opportunities to use the historic environment to improve people's lives, meet their needs and address climate change issues make this 'do nothing option' untenable. It is unlikely that the need to address the decline of the Historic Environment can be met without implementing an HE Policy.

³⁴⁹ [Listed Buildings Survey](#)

³⁵⁰ The 2023/24 figure of 1,111 heritage assets on HARNI is just over double the 527 structures recorded in 2018/19.

³⁵¹ [Wellbeing and Historic Environment: Why Bother? | Historic England](#)

³⁵² [Whole Life Carbon Guidance | Department for Communities](#)

	possibilities that an HE Policy might have for meeting wider Programme for Government needs. HE Policy is an opportunity to join together, understand and action the relationship between a cared for historic environment and the return from that for people.	
Support Councils to create local ‘Heritage Plans’ rather than having an overarching HE Policy	The Department helps local councils to support communities through oversight of Community Planning and regeneration projects. However, the Department does not have powers to direct councils to create Heritage Plans to care for, enhance and use of their historic environment. In 2018– 2021 the Department supported Derry City and Strabane District Council to create their Heritage Plan as a pilot. Whilst this 3-year project successfully delivered DSDC’s Heritage Plan, the Plan was restricted to one 11th of NI. The Department’s annual budgets do not currently allow for projects to extend over one financial year. Whilst there has been engagement and research carried out by HED with Government Departments, Councils and heritage asset owners, as there has been no HE Policy to date, there has been no opportunity to gather wide public opinion through public consultation on the management of the Historic Environment in NI.	Through engagement and consultation, HE Policy will represent a unified attitude to the historic environment. This will still allow for Heritage Plans to be created in councils but will unify those plans and fill any gaps – ensuring that just as the historic environment exists in every corner of NI, so doe HE Policy to manage and enjoy it. Creating a universal policy which goes out to public consultation across NI offers the opportunity to collect a wide and more comprehensive view on people’s attitude and hopes for the historic environment in the future.
Manage the historic environment reactively through statutory duties	In many respects this is the ‘business as usual’ option, because HED carries out its statutory duties to respond to planning applications for designated assets as a consultee of Planning Departments within each of the 11 District Councils.	It is unlikely that the need to address the decline of the Historic Environment can be met through penalty. Experience tells us that whilst enforcement and reactive protection is needed, it does not win ‘hearts and minds’ and has in some cases led to resentment of protection. In the Second Survey for example, reactive listing has led to several cases of

	However, HED requested that councils investigate 56 new enforcement cases between March 2021 and March 2023, of these, a significant number did not go 'live'. Furthermore, Urgent Works Notices (UWNs) have not been actioned by councils, with a shared 'pot' of funding between all 11 councils potentially being inadequate to cover the costs of carrying out UWNs concurrently across all councils, and a reluctance in some councils where there is less heritage expertise to implement Buildings Preservation Notices (BPNs).	bad press about listing. The Listed Building Owners Survey (HED 2025)³⁵³ correlated value with care: it concluded that those that 'value' their heritage assets are more likely to keep them in good condition. A holistic and forward looking HE Policy which brings out and supports both local statutory powers to enforce protection alongside evidence for the benefits to people of protection and enjoyment of heritage assets is a much better footing on which to bring the care of the historic environment forwards.
Improve the Historic Environment by creating a number of separate strategies	Again, in some respects this is a 'business as usual' option. Strategies like Archaeology 2030, and a draft Heritage at Risk strategy are underway independent of each other.	Having an overarching HE Policy gives the opportunity to create a cohesive whole, whereby it can be shown that collective actions contribute to a greater whole. Creating a universal policy which goes out to public consultation across NI offers the opportunity to collect a wide and more comprehensive view on people's attitude and hopes for the historic environment in the future.
Create short, annual or 3 year strategies for the Historic Environment	Given the time taken for engagement (2022 – 2025), this is unlikely to produce as comprehensive a policy as one which maximises engagement and takes a long-term view. The historic environment does not change quickly. It is a testament to its resilience that many buildings which are on the HARNI list have been vacant for longer than 10 years. There are no 'quick' wins for an historic environment where the needs include the building up over time of skills, a change in public perception and a longer-term change in value.	A long-term view is needed to maximise the impact of Historic Environment Policy. This also gives time for the cumulative and synergistic positive effects of HE Policy on people to be realised, understood and collated, which could then be evidenced in a Policy review in 10 years' time.

³⁵³ [Listed Buildings Survey](#)

Create an HE Policy with Public Consultation	There has never been and Historic Environment Policy for Northern Ireland. Leadership and a high-level government overview is needed to give weight to the economic and social benefits of the Heritage Sector, creating a platform for high-level mutually beneficial partnerships between departments and local government. A long term view is needed to understand and make visible the benefits of a cared for and protected Historic Environment to people for whom heritage is not currently considered 'accessible'. The Historic Environment is in decline. Decisive, planned, long-term action is needed to address this decline – and realise the potential benefits for people everywhere to be gained from a reversal in decline.	A long-term view is needed to maximise the impact on and of Historic Environment Policy on people, places and the planet. This also gives time for the cumulative and synergistic positive effects of HE Policy to be realised, understood and collated, which could then be evidenced in a Policy review in 10 years' time. Public Consultation will ensure that the views of HE Policy which demonstrates government's attitude to the potential of Northern Ireland's historic environment, is a material consideration in decision making at high-level ,which has a vision, clear goals and measurable metrics which are monitored will be the most effective tool to deliver change and reward for people in Northern Ireland.
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Enhancing Beneficial Effects

HE Policy aims are expected to have beneficial effects on Northern Ireland's historic and wider environment. This is particularly so when compared to the 'do nothing' alternatives in the sections of this report to follow as many aspects of the historic environment are currently in poor and/or deteriorating condition. HE Policy's strong focus on sustainable development, climate change, health and wellbeing, and quality environments will add a 'halo effect' to the benefits delivered for the historic environment. However, many of these cross-benefits will be the result of partnerships and cannot be realised by HE Policy alone.

As the development of HE Policy continues through public consultation, further alternatives may be suggested by consultees, the heritage sector and/or the general public. Consideration of these will be included the Stage D SEA Post Adoption Statement.

10 Draft Historic Environment Policy – Summary of Aims

The following Matrix summarises the proposed Policy aims under the Objectives of **Strengthening, Connecting and Innovating**, as described in Section 2.4.

Historic Environment Policy Vision: ‘Our People. Our Past. Our Place An inclusive and valued historic environment that delivers for Northern Ireland.’

Policy Aims

		1. People and Communities	2. Places	3. Partnerships
Historic Environment	Strengthening: A well-cared for historic environment where best practice is universal.	1. Developing best practice to identify and safeguard our historic environment 2. Developing a highly skilled workforce to conserve and sustainably develop our historic environment	3. Investing in the capacity of owners, volunteers and organisations to care for and use local historic assets to meet their needs 4. Empowering communities to adapt, enhance and re-use historic assets, drive regeneration and shape distinctive places	5. Using heritage assets to contribute to Programme for Government including the Wellbeing Framework: Stronger Economy, Better Homes, Healthier Lives and Brighter Futures 6. Maintaining and managing the historic environment in the face of environmental problems
	Connecting: Thriving places - where the unique value of heritage is understood and enjoyed.	7. Supporting inclusive and diverse access to historic places for everyone 8. Exploring the potential for historic places to support wellbeing, and quality of life	9. Aligning the care of heritage assets with distinctive places, landscapes, and seascapes, supporting biodiversity 10. Proudly showcasing, promoting and marketing our unique historic environment locally and internationally 11. Embedding transboundary and international cooperation into the historic environment sector	12. Partnering with government departments, public bodies, and agencies, as well as asset owners, land owners and volunteers, to use the historic environment creatively 13. Reaching out: supporting heritage education and activity for inspiration, learning and enjoyment. 14. Evolving our shared understanding through accessible research, surveys, records, artefacts and archives
	Innovating: A flourishing historic environment sector which is protected, sustained, accessed and used to its full potential .	15. Emphasising the contribution of our historic places to peace - community cohesion, good relations and healing through heritage	16. Collaborating with others to magnify an evidence base for the catalytic effect of heritage investment	17. Driving innovation and enterprise in the historic environment sector towards research, new technologies and new ways of working

Our People. Our Past. Our Place: an inclusive and valued historic environment that delivers for Northern Ireland.

11 Next Steps

11.1 Proposed consultation timescales and methods

The SEA Guide produced jointly by the four UK governments in 2005, in common with other SEA guidance documents, sets out a five-stage process (A to E) for carrying out SEA. This is included at Appendix 1 and 1b.

11.2 Stage D – Public Consultation

Draft HE Policy and the SEA Environmental Report are now presented for public and statutory consultation over a 12-week period in Spring 2026. This will include an easy-read version of the Policy.

The statutory consultation Body for NI is DAERA. The SEA Environmental Report will also be issued to the relevant Consultation Bodies in the Republic of Ireland and the remainder of the UK.

Members of the public likely to participate in SEA consultation are those affected or likely to be affected by, or having an interest in the decision-making, including relevant sectoral non-governmental organisations, and heritage asset owners. The purpose of this stage is to give the public and the Consultation Bodies an opportunity to express their opinions on the findings of the SEA Environmental Report, and to use it as a reference point in commenting on the review of HE Policy.

In line with the NI SEA Regulations, the Department must take account of the SEA Environmental Report and of any opinions which are expressed upon it as it prepares revised HE Policy for adoption. Therefore, comments received from DAERA, members of the public and other stakeholders during the consultation process will be reviewed to determine their relevance.

Once the HE Policy has been adopted, an SEA Post-Adoption Statement will be produced to provide information on how the SEA Environmental Report and consultees' opinions were taken into account in deciding the final form of HE Policy.

11.3 Stage E – Adoption and Monitoring

The Northern Ireland Directive requires the Department for Communities, as the Managing Authority, to monitor significant environmental effects of implementing HE Policy. If significant effects are identified, a monitoring programme will be proposed in the form of a Monitoring Framework Document (and summarised in the accompanying SEA Post-Adoption Statement) so that the actual impacts of the policy can be evaluated.

It is suggested that a ‘Monitoring barometer’ of headline statistics is created to monitor HE Policy.

These headline statistics are proposed as follows:

Historic Environment:

*indicates new statistic to be generated

Strengthening:

*A well- cared for historic environment where **best practice** is universal.*

Connecting:

*Thriving **places** - where the unique value of heritage is understood and enjoyed.*

Innovating:

*A flourishing historic environment sector which is protected, sustained, accessed and used to its full **potential**.*

People and Communities

BRIGHTER FUTURES

Number of designated heritage assets in NI as reported in the Northern Ireland Environmental Report

SKILLS AND EMPOLYMENT

*Number of people in heritage skills training in NI (construction skills and wider heritage skills)

HEALTHIER LIVES

% of adults and young people in Northern Ireland who have visited a place of historic interest (by age) (NISRA)

*Significant positive life satisfaction difference after visiting a heritage place (NISRA)

EQUAL SOCIETY

% of adults with a disability to have visited a place of historic interest within the previous year (NISRA)

SOCIAL IMPACT

* Measurement of Social value impact of heritage buildings and projects

EQUAL SOCIETY

% difference in adults from the Protestant/Catholic community to visit a place of historic interest within the previous year

THRIVING CHILDREN

% young people visiting a place of historic interest within the previous year.

Places

SAFER COMMUNITIES

Total number of heritage assets on HAR saved – (places of deprivation, rural or urban places)

*Number of community organisations in NI that are housed within or manage a historic building or monument.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT -

*Proportion of historic environment planning consultations that gained approval

SAFER COMMUNITIES

Listed building and monument condition

TOURISM

% increase Heritage attraction visits (annual) TNI

GLOBAL CONNECTIONS

ROI/NI and UK/NI Transboundary World Heritage Bids

STRONGER ECONOMY

*£contribution of the NI Heritage Sector to NI and UK Economy

Partnerships

PARTNERING WITH COMMUNITIES

*Number of Community Aset Transfers that are Heritage Buildings

BETTER HOMES

*Number of new social housing units in heritage buildings

STRONGER ECONOMY

*Relative % of Repair and Maintenance Output in the NI Construction Sector by quarter

CULTURAL & CREATIVE COLLABORATION

*Number of creative businesses in NI based in Conservation areas and listed buildings

*Number of Heritage Skills, Conservation and Adaptation awards in NI

BRIGHTER FUTURES

European Heritage Open Days visitors across Equality categories (NISRA)

*% HERoNI records and artefacts accessible to public – physically, digitally

BRIGHTER FUTURES

*Number of Higher Education Heritage Research and Innovation Projects Supported

12Appendices

12.1 Appendix 1a and 1b – Table and diagram : Stages of the SEA process (Source: A Practical Guide to the SEA – DAERA)

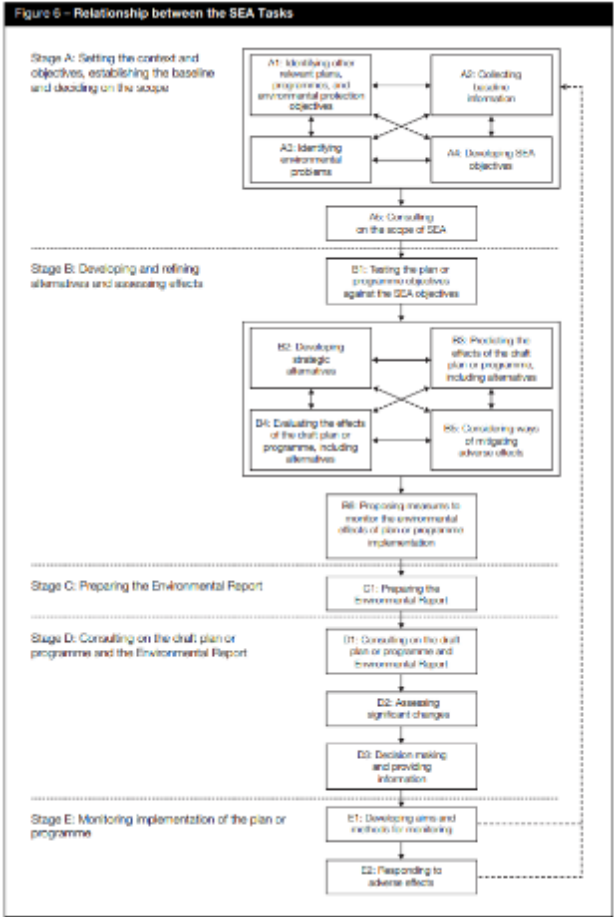


Figure 6 – Stages in the SEA process

SEA stages and tasks	Purpose
Stage A: Setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope	
Identifying other relevant plans, programmes and environmental protection objectives	To establish how the plan or programme is affected by outside factors, to suggest ideas for how any constraints can be addressed, and to help to identify SEA objectives
Collecting baseline information	To provide an evidence base for environmental problems, prediction of effects, and monitoring, to help in the development of SEA objectives
Identifying environmental problems	To help focus the SEA and streamline the subsequent stages, including baseline information analysis, setting of the SEA objectives, prediction of effects and monitoring
Developing SEA objectives	To provide a means by which the environmental performance of the plan or programme and alternatives can be assessed
Consulting on the scope of SEA	To ensure that the SEA covers the likely significant environmental effects of the plan or programme
Stage B: Developing and refining alternatives and assessing effects	
Testing the plan or programme objectives against the SEA objectives	To identify potential synergies or inconsistencies between the objectives of the plan or programme and the SEA objectives and help in developing alternatives
Developing strategic alternatives	To develop and refine strategic alternatives
Predicting the effects of the plan or programme, including alternatives	To predict the significant environmental effects of the plan or programme and alternatives
Evaluating the effects of the plan or programme, including alternatives	To evaluate the predicted effects of the plan or programme and its alternatives and assist in the refinement of the plan or programme
Mitigating adverse effects	To ensure that adverse effects are identified and potential mitigation measures are considered
Proposing measures to monitor the environmental effects of plan or programme implementation	To detail the means by which the environmental performance of the plan or programme can be assessed
Stage C: Preparing the Environmental Report	
Preparing the Environmental Report	To present the predicted environmental effects of the plan or programme, including alternatives, in a form suitable for public consultation and use by decision makers
Stage D: Consulting on the draft plan or programme and the Environmental Report	
Consulting the public and Consultation Bodies on the draft plan or programme and the Environmental Report	To give the public and the Consultation Bodies an opportunity to express their opinions on the findings of the Environmental Report and to use it as a reference point in commenting on the plan or programme. To gather more information through the opinions and concerns of the public
Assessing significant changes	To ensure that the environmental implications of any significant changes to the draft plan or programme at this stage are assessed and taken into account
Making decisions and providing information	To provide information on how the Environmental Report and consulted opinions were taken into account in deciding the final form of the plan or programme to be adopted
Stage E: Monitoring the significant effects of implementing the plan or programme on the environment	
Developing aims and methods for monitoring	To track the environmental effects of the plan or programme to show whether they are as predicted, to help identify adverse effects
Responding to adverse effects	To prepare for appropriate responses where adverse effects are identified

Available in alternative formats.

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Historic Environment Policy Public Consultation Questionnaire

Your views on the vision and aims
for an Historic Environment Policy
for Northern Ireland



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ABOUT YOU

1. Are you responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation? (Required)

Individual

Organisation

2. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, please provide the organisation's name. (Please DO NOT include personal names / personal data)

3. Consent to publication of consultation responses. (We will remove any personal names / personal data from any published responses.) (Required)

I **agree** that all or parts of my consultation response may be published.

I **do not agree** that my consultation response is published.

Your views on the vision and aims for an Historic Environment Policy for Northern Ireland

Below are questions relating to the draft vision and aims for an Historic Environment Policy for Northern Ireland. The department is keen to have your views on these matters and appreciates you taking the time to complete the questionnaire. For further information on the policy development work, please click on the following link: [\[Link not yet live, please see Background Document provided\]](#)

The Historic Environment includes all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and deliberately planted or managed flora.

Whilst the primary statutory management of the historic environment in Northern Ireland falls to the Department for Communities (DfC), responsibility through ownership and stewardship of the historic environment, (and therefore actions relating to policy) fall to a wide variety of organisations and individuals including but not exclusive to Central Government, Local Government, ecclesiastical bodies, businesses, charities and private individuals. Suggested actions below each policy aim in this consultation could support historic environment policy.

Section One: Draft Vision

In 10 years, Northern Ireland’s historic environment could be a more valued and accessible resource that enriches daily life for everyone. Engagement would ensure people from all ages, abilities and backgrounds can connect with, and benefit from, heritage. Well-maintained, characterful places would support wellbeing, pride, and social cohesion, while attracting investment and tourism. Communities, councils and skilled professionals would work together to conserve and adapt heritage sustainably, supporting a circular economy. Ongoing research, education, and digital innovation would deepen understanding and appreciation, creating a shared sense of identity and ensuring that heritage continues to deliver lasting social, cultural and economic benefits for future generations.

Our Policy Vision has been developed to reflect these aspirations.

Section 1: Draft Policy Vision		
Our draft vision is for: Our People. Our Past. Our Place: an inclusive and valued historic environment that delivers for Northern Ireland.		5-point scale to be used
		strongly agree agree neither agree nor disagree disagree strongly disagree
4.	To what extent do you agree or disagree with our draft vision?	
5.	Please provide us with any comments you may have on our draft vision.	

Section Two: Strengthening

The Historic Environment in Northern Ireland is in decline.

Our Policy goal is to achieve: **A well- cared for historic environment where best practice is universal.**

Strengthening focuses on:

- Protection, conservation and management
- Skills, workforce development and training
- Supporting owners, volunteers and communities
- Using heritage to meet government outcomes

Section 2: Strengthening		
The following aims are important areas of priority for Northern Ireland's historic environment.		5-point scale to be used
		strongly agree agree neither agree nor disagree disagree strongly disagree
6.	Aim 1: Developing best practice to identify and safeguard our historic environment Key actions might include: • Reviewing and updating legislation/designation practices in line with international conventions and conservation principles. • Improving designation to ensure that records are up to date, accurate and accessible • Promoting better understanding of heritage protection by improving access to information, advice and support. • Enhancing education and awareness of the historic environment to ensure long-term safeguarding and public engagement.	
Please provide us with any comments you have on Strengthening: Aim 1		

		5-point scale to be used				
		strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	strongly disagree
7.	Aim 2: Developing a highly skilled workforce to conserve and sustainably develop our historic environment Key actions might include: • Developing and strengthening heritage skills by promoting partnerships, training, apprenticeships, and career pathways. • Improving owners' access to skilled contractors and appropriate materials for maintaining and conserving heritage buildings. • Maximising the economic and growth potential of heritage skills and training to support wider activity like tourism, construction and the green economy.					
Please provide us with any comments you have on Strengthening: Aim 2						

		5-point scale to be used				
		strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	strongly disagree
8.	Aim 3: Investing in the capacity of owners, volunteers and organisations to care for and use historic assets to meet their needs Key actions might include: • Supporting training and opportunities for people involved in caring for heritage assets to build skills and stewardship. • Empowering local communities to manage and use heritage assets, for example through community historic monument or places of worship capacity support • Promoting community involvement in decision-making (policies, funding, priorities) to strengthen regeneration, wellbeing and local engagement.					
Please provide us with any comments you have on Strengthening: Aim 3						

		5-point scale to be used				
		strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	strongly disagree
9.	Aim 4: Empowering communities to adapt, enhance and re-use historic assets, drive regeneration and shape distinctive places Key actions might include: • Supporting and expanding heritage-led regeneration financial initiatives by building on successful schemes like Village Catalyst and Townscape Heritage Initiatives. • Addressing and reducing heritage at risk by promoting sustainable reuse and investment in neglected historic buildings. • Encouraging partnerships and community involvement in managing heritage assets, including through training and mechanisms like Community Asset Transfer.					
Please provide us with any comments you have on Strengthening: Aim 4						

		5-point scale to be used				
		strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	strongly disagree
10.	Aim 5: Using heritage assets to contribute to Programme for Government outcomes including a Stronger Economy, Better Homes, Healthier Lives and Brighter Futures. Key actions might include: • Strengthening partnerships and collaboration to realise the health, education, economic and social value potential of heritage • Integrating heritage into planning, development, tourism and local policies to ensure a coordinated and sustainable approach. • Promoting the reuse and enhancement of existing heritage assets (including monuments, parks and gardens and vacant buildings) to support communities, housing, sustainability and economic growth.					
Please provide us with any comments you have on Strengthening: Aim 5						

		5-point scale to be used				
		strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	strongly disagree
11.	Aim 6: Maintaining and managing the historic environment in the face of environmental challenges Key actions might include: • Promoting regular maintenance and preventative care as cost-effective ways to protect heritage and manage risks. • Providing guidance on improving energy efficiency and climate resilience of heritage assets. • Identifying, assessing and adapting vulnerable historic places and landscapes to withstand environmental threats.					
Please provide us with any comments you have on Strengthening: Aim 6						

Section Three: Connecting

When people connect in and to historic places, they want to visit, live in and look after those places - and they thrive.

Our Policy goal is to achieve: **Thriving places** - where the unique value of heritage is understood and enjoyed.

Connecting focuses on:

- Inclusive access for all communities
- Health, wellbeing and quality of life
- Distinctive places, landscapes and seascapes
- Promotion, tourism and creating an international profile

The following aims are important areas of priority for Northern Ireland's historic environment.		5-point scale to be used				
		strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	strongly disagree
12.	Aim 7: Supporting inclusive and diverse access to historic places for everyone Key actions might include: • Addressing inequalities in access to historic places by targeting barriers related to disability, deprivation and community background. • Promoting inclusivity and diversity in heritage engagement by ensuring historic environments are relevant and accessible to everyone. • Encouraging participation from underrepresented communities by supporting opportunities for people to share and tell their own heritage stories. • Promoting engagement with heritage by children and young people through programmes, events and activities that show the continuing and deepening relevance and importance of heritage today.					
Please provide us with any comments you have on Connecting: Aim 7						

		5-point scale to be used				
		strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	strongly disagree
13.	Aim 8: Exploring the potential for historic places to support wellbeing and quality of life Key actions might include: • Collaborating with custodians and the health sector to better understand and realise the health and wellbeing benefits of heritage. • Promoting the use of heritage sites and cultural assets for therapeutic and social purposes to improve mental health and community connection. • Enhancing care and access to the historic environment to maximise its contribution to wellbeing, social cohesion and quality of life.					
Please provide us with any comments you have on Connecting: Aim 8						

		5-point scale to be used				
		strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	strongly disagree
14.	Aim 9: Aligning the care of heritage assets with distinctive places, landscapes and seascapes, supporting biodiversity Key actions might include: • Supporting landowners and communities to manage and care for heritage within productive landscapes, especially in agricultural settings. • Protecting and conserving terrestrial and underwater cultural heritage through identification, partnerships and policy integration. • Promoting the sustainable management of coasts, landscapes and waterways to enhance biodiversity, climate resilience, tourism and public engagement.					
Please provide us with any comments you have on Connecting: Aim 9						

		5-point scale to be used				
		strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	strongly disagree
15.	Aim 10: Proudly showcasing, promoting and marketing our unique historic environment locally and internationally Key actions might include: • Supporting the promotion and marketing of heritage assets to enhance cultural tourism and attract visitors. • Encouraging investment in place-based heritage to improve local quality of life and drive economic growth. • Highlighting and strengthening the value of heritage in defining place identity to increase its appeal to residents, investors and tourists.					
Please provide us with any comments you have on Connecting: Aim 10						

		5-point scale to be used				
		strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	strongly disagree
16.	Aim 11: Embedding transboundary and international cooperation into the historic environment Key actions might include: • Strengthening international and cross-boundary partnerships to enhance collaboration and shared understanding of heritage. • Promoting the global significance of Northern Ireland's historic environment to build connections and recognition internationally. • Leveraging globally important heritage assets (e.g. World Heritage Sites) to support reconciliation, pride and social, economic and cultural benefits.					
Please provide us with any comments you have on Connecting: Aim 11						

		5-point scale to be used				
		strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	strongly disagree
17.	Aim 12: Partnering with government departments, public bodies and agencies, as well as asset owners, landowners and volunteers, to use the historic environment creatively Key actions might include: • Strengthening partnerships across cultural, environmental and heritage sectors to support the management and enjoyment of heritage assets. • Promoting public engagement with heritage, including arts, traditions and storytelling, especially to inspire children and young people. • Supporting people in discovering, valuing and caring for their heritage by encouraging understanding of its cultural and community impact.					
Please provide us with any comments you have on Connecting: Aim 12						

		5-point scale to be used				
		strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	strongly disagree
18.	Aim 13: Reaching out: supporting heritage education and activity for inspiration, learning and enjoyment Key actions might include: • Building on existing public engagement with heritage by supporting events, festivals and community-led initiatives. • Expanding outreach to underrepresented groups to encourage wider participation in heritage activities. • Supporting youth engagement and volunteering in heritage to sustain and grow interest among future generations.					
Please provide us with any comments you have on Connecting: Aim 13						

		5-point scale to be used				
		strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	strongly disagree
19.	Aim 14: Evolving our shared understanding through accessible research, surveys, records, artefacts and archives Key actions might include: - Improving access to knowledge and advice on heritage maintenance by developing partnerships and making information more accessible. - Encouraging community engagement in heritage research and conservation through local projects and initiatives. Removing barriers to understanding heritage significance by promoting inclusive, outward-facing communication and education.					
Please provide us with any comments you have on Connecting: Aim 14						

Section Four: Innovating

The historic environment is not always considered essential to people's needs.

Our Policy Goal is for: a flourishing historic environment which is protected, sustained, accessed and used to its full potential.

Innovation focuses on:

- Informing new narratives, interpretative approaches and approaches to story-telling which draw out the relevance and impact of the shared past in understanding and taking action in the present
- Stronger evidence and valuation of heritage benefits
- Digital tools, research and new technologies
- Data driven decision making

The following aims are important areas of priority for Northern Ireland's historic environment.		5-point scale to be used				
		strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	strongly disagree
20.	Aim 15: Emphasising the contribution of our historic places to peace, community cohesion, good relations and healing through heritage Key actions might include: • Promoting heritage as a tool for social connection and cohesion by supporting community and place-based initiatives, like the Listed Places of Worship Forum and Community Monuments projects. • Encouraging the creation of shared, inclusive heritage narratives that emphasise common history and collective identity. • Supporting engagement with diverse perspectives on heritage to overcome barriers and build respect across different communities.					
Please provide us with any comments you have on Innovating: Aim 15						

		5-point scale to be used				
		strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	strongly disagree
21.	Aim 16: Collaborating with others to provide an evidence base for the catalytic effect of heritage investment Key actions might include: • Collaborating to gather and measure evidence on the social, economic and environmental value of heritage. • Promoting and demonstrating the economic benefits of heritage investment, including the heritage premium and wider wellbeing impacts. • Strengthening understanding of heritage's wider impacts to support informed funding and investment decisions.					
Please provide us with any comments you have on Innovating: Aim 16						

		5-point scale to be used				
		strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	strongly disagree
22.	Aim 17: Driving innovation and enterprise so that the historic environment and people who access and use it benefit from research, new technologies and new ways of working Key actions might include: • Supporting the use of digital technologies and innovation (e.g. LiDAR, photogrammetry, GIS) to improve understanding, planning and protection of heritage assets. • Expanding access to digital heritage information and archives to enhance research, decision-making and public engagement. • Providing digital skills training and support for communities to help record, preserve and share local heritage, stories and traditions.					
Please provide us with any comments you have on Innovating: Aim 17						

Section Five: Joint Heritage, Culture and Creativity Actions

Section Five raises an number of issues that have been identified as relevant to, and important for, more than one of the HCC policies (the historic environment, arts, public libraries and museums) being developed in this phase of the Heritage, Culture and Creativity Programme and which might best be taken forward on a programme-wide basis.

Arising from work under the Heritage, Culture and Creativity (HCC) Programme, a number of actions have emerged at a programme-wide basis. We would welcome your response to these.		5-point scale to be used				
		strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	strongly disagree
23.	An assessment should be made of the capital needs of Heritage, Culture and Creativity sectors and a strategy to address them developed					
24.	A programme of research should be implemented to explore the social and economic value of the HCC sectors , (including the contribution of the sectors which support the historic environment) to the priorities established in the Programme for Government and other Government policy and programmes.					
25.	An assessment of skills requirements across the heritage/historic environment sector should be undertaken, in the context of a wider HCC review and a strategy to address need developed.					
26.	Work should be undertaken across the HCC sectors to develop new networks with a view to catalysing new potential and building innovative new projects and partnerships.					
27.	Work should be undertaken to support the HCC sectors adapt to the current funding environment by exploring the means to maximise revenue streams beyond public funding and by applying existing, available, funding options.					
28.	Please provide us with any comments you have on the proposed HCC Programme-level Actions.					

Section Six: Strategic Environmental Assessment of Historic Environment Policy

In Northern Ireland, Plans and Programmes which may have an impact on the Environment are assessed through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004.

Historic Environment Policy is likely to have a significant effect on Northern Ireland's Environment over the next 10 years and beyond. In March 2025 the Department for Communities submitted an Historic Environment Policy for Northern Ireland Screening Document to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), who confirmed therein the requirement for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to be carried out.

You can find a copy of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for Northern Ireland Historic Environment Policy alongside this Background Document on the Historic Environment Policy Consultation page.

You or your organisation may wish to comment on the SEA Environmental Report for Historic Environment Policy. This section of the survey is **optional**.

The SEA report demonstrates that there are many complementary positive effects on other aspects of the environment which will result from the implementation of historic environment policy. Any potential adverse effects, and methods to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset significant adverse effects have been considered and are also described within the SEA report. We would welcome your response to these.

		5-point scale to be used				
		strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	strongly disagree
29.	Do you agree that the strategic environmental assessment of Historic Environment Policy has identified any key positive and/or negative impacts with regard to other environmental strategies, policies and programmes?					
30.	Please provide us with any comments you have, including possible unintended consequences of the proposals and any practical difficulties you foresee in implementing them.					
31.	Do you agree or disagree with the approach outlined in the SEA to Metrics to measure the impact of Historic Environment Policy?					
27.	Please provide any comments to explain your answer, or any suggested alternative metrics.					

End of Questionnaire



Department for

Communities

www.communities-ni.gov.uk



Historic Environment Policy – Public Consultation

Background to Public Consultation



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HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT POLICY: PUBLIC CONSULTATION

OVERVIEW

The Department for Communities (DfC) is the Executive department with responsibility for policy on the historic environment in Northern Ireland.

The **historic environment includes all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time**, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and deliberately planted or managed flora. It is a key contributor to our sense of place, identity, and distinctiveness.

The focus of this consultation is on our **draft vision statement**, and on our proposed **17 policy aims** which will be the basis of a new policy for the support and management of our historic environment.

The intended period covered by this Historic Environment Policy is **10 years** from date of publication (proposed 2027 – 2037), with a **mid-point review**. However, any impacts associated with the proposed Policy may take effect over a period of many decades. For this reason, a longer-term view has been taken on potential impacts.

The **geographical area covered by** the Historic Environment Policy takes in the **whole of Northern Ireland**, including inshore and offshore marine regions. The Policy however also considers existing and

potential transboundary partnerships with the remainder of the UK, the Republic of Ireland and relevant international partners.

The Policy vision and aims have been prepared after extensive **engagement**.

The work to develop this policy forms part of the Heritage, Culture and Creativity (HCC) Programme which is also developing policies for museums, public libraries and the arts. The HCC was established by the Minister for Communities in July 2024 and seeks to ‘address actions to conserve, protect and promote our cultural heritage and historic environment; and to encourage, support and develop the curiosity, active engagement and creativity it helps to inspire’.¹

The programme followed the Culture Arts and Heritage Taskforce’s ‘A Way Forward’, ‘Art of Recovery’ and ‘Investing in Creative Delivery’² reports, and the department has used the work of the Taskforce as a key basis for its policy development. The sector told us to **Strengthen, Connect, and Innovate** to sustain our culture arts and heritage into the future.

Your views about the future management of the historic environment through the **Historic Environment Policy are important to us** and will **inform the new policy**. A questionnaire on the draft vision and the policy aims is available at the link below and we would welcome your response by **23rd October 2026**.

¹ See Heritage, Culture and Creativity (HCC) Programme | Department for Communities

² Culture, Arts and Heritage: A Way Forward | Department for Communities; The Art of Recovery Survive: Stabilise: Strengthen | Department for Communities; Investing in Creative Delivery – A report from the Culture, Arts & Heritage Strategy Taskforce | Department for Communities

ABOUT THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

Following on from the work of the Culture, Arts and Heritage Taskforce, the department has carried out extensive engagement.

HED's Listed Building and Historic Monument **Owners'** surveys³ told us about the conservation deficit, the need to invest in skills, access to advice, expertise and information.

We met with each of the 11 **District Councils and all central Government Departments**. We found potential partnerships, connections, shared aims and new ideas which could connect and amplify the actions across a joined-up HCC Programme and within an Historic Environment Policy which is linked to the Programme for Government – a policy which supports People, Places, the Planet and Peace.

We met within our own department and we sought the views of the **Historic Environment Stakeholder Group⁴, The Heritage Skills Core Group,⁵ The Historic Buildings Council and the Historic Monuments Council**, who asked us for better partnerships and for people and place to be uppermost. We looked at how we could jointly meet the Department for Communities' common purpose: **'Supporting people, Building communities, Shaping places'**.

We carried out **Rural Impact, Equality and Strategic Environmental Assessment**

Screening – to make sure that the policy is inclusive, improving the lives of people and our environment.

The results of our engagement have shaped the policy, telling us about the 'ecosystem' needed to sustain our historic environment and to maximise the impact it can make on Northern Ireland.

This public consultation is an opportunity to **have your say**.

If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, we would ask that only one person from each organisation submits a response. A paper-based questionnaire is available on request from **HCCpublicconsultation@communities-ni.gov.uk**

For this consultation, we may publish all responses except for those where the respondent indicates that they do not wish for their responses to be published. All responses from organisations and individuals responding in a professional capacity may be published. We will remove any personal data, including email addresses and telephone numbers, from these responses; but apart from this, we may publish them in full. For more information about what we do with personal data please see our **consultation privacy notice**.

³ Market failure in heritage | Department for Communities

⁴ The Northern Ireland Historic Environment Stakeholder group consists of an alliance of representatives from key stakeholder organisations including heritage NGO's, universities, district councils, and government agencies. It is convened by the Historic Environment Division of the Department for Communities.

⁵ The Heritage Skills Core Group is a body set up by DfC of key partners interested in tackling the issue of heritage skills.

Your response, and all other responses to this consultation, may also be disclosed on request in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR); however, all disclosures will be in line with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (UK) 2016/679.

If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential, so that this may be considered if the Department should receive a request for the information under the FOIA or EIR.

In order to facilitate the survey, Citizen Space, which is not operated by the Department, is used as a data processor. Details of Citizen Space's privacy policy can be found online at **Citizen Space Privacy Policy**.

MINISTERIAL FOREWORD



In July 2024 as part of the Heritage, Culture and Creativity Programme, I made a commitment to deliver the first policy for the historic environment in Northern Ireland. The consultation being launched today marks an important step in that process.

The draft policy presents us with an opportunity to appreciate and maximise the positive contribution that this part of our environment makes to each of us, to our communities and to our wellbeing. We have an asset that is found in every corner of Northern Ireland, a product of a rich and complex history that has made our landscape, villages, towns and cities unique and special. Our historic environment belongs to all of us.

My department aims to support communities at all levels. We want to ensure that the historic environment, which is at the heart of every local community, is part of decision making and is used, cared for and adapted sustainably. I recognise that a framework of support will be needed, with priorities for funding identified across this policy, so that it can contribute to a promising future – one where heritage assets, places and activities continue to have positive impacts for the people they connect.

This policy has been developed in partnership with all our stakeholders. Their honest and informed participation emphasised not only what the historic environment means to people, but that there is a real need to improve the way we are managing this resource.

This is your chance to contribute your views on how our historic environment should be identified, protected, managed and celebrated to maximise the contribution it makes to how we live, now and in the future.

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this consultation.

Gordon Lyons MLA,
Minister for Communities

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT POLICY: CONSULTATION

Introduction and Context

1. Our historic environment includes all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and place over time. This includes all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and deliberately planted or managed flora.
2. The Department for Communities and District Planning Authorities record the ‘heritage assets’ that make up our historic environment in a range of ways. DfC designates the best of these for protection as either Scheduled Historic Monuments or Listed Buildings. District Planning Authorities bring controls to area designations such as Conservation Areas and Areas of Townscape/ Village Character.

As of March 2024, we have recorded tens of thousands of heritage assets in Northern Ireland. These can be listed as follows:

- 1 Transboundary Cultural World Heritage Site
- 18,222 Sites and Monuments
- 2,053 Scheduled Historic Monuments
- 187 Monuments in State care
- 16,321 Historic buildings worthy of recording
- 9,124 Listed Buildings
- 16,648 sites on the Industrial Heritage Record
- (24% protected by formal designation)
- 663 Historic Parks or Gardens (HPGs)
- 4,592 Defence Heritage Sites
- 324 battle sites
- 60 conservation areas
- 205 Areas of Townscape Character (ATC)s
- 130 Local Landscape Policy Areas (LCAs)
- 11 Areas of Significant Archaeological Interest
- 403 Historic Nucleated Settlements
- 832 Maritime Heritage Sites (inc in SMR)
- 384 known wreck sites
- 4 protected wrecks

3. Cultural traditions, folklore, festivals, oral traditions and storytelling play a part in our experience of the historic environment, but this policy focuses predominantly on physical assets.
4. There has never been an historic environment policy in Northern Ireland.
5. During the development of this policy we have engaged with a wide range of stakeholders including the Culture Arts and Heritage Taskforce, district councils, government departments and the heritage sector. We have also carried out surveys of owners to understand their views in detail.
6. As a result, we have developed 17 aims which we are proposing should form the basis of the Historic Environment Policy. We want your views on these proposals.
7. Although the Department for Communities is leading the implementation of the Policy, the consultation describes actions that any organisation and even individuals can take to effect meaningful change. We will rely on multiple organisations and partners to achieve our ambition. For example:
 - We propose that Charities, volunteers and heritage organisations, networks or individuals should be supported by high-level activity like the provision of funding or advice and guidance;
 - We intend that District Councils will use this Policy to direct Local Development and Community Planning for place-making, heritage plans, environmental plans and tourism, and to consider how to use the historic environment to achieve social cohesion and good relations;
 - We have also identified significant ways that the Northern Ireland Executive and government can deliver more through the historic environment.

CONTEXT

The Heritage, Culture and Creativity Programme

8. The work to develop Historic Environment policy forms part of the Heritage, Culture and Creativity (HCC) Programme. HCC was established by the Minister for Communities in July 2024. It will see the development of new policies for the arts, historic environment, public libraries and museums and will give each of the policy areas the status they merit, providing each of the communities of interest with their own focus. More information about HCC can be found at **Heritage, Culture and Creativity Programme**.

Guiding Principles for Policy Development

9. The Heritage, Culture and Creativity (HCC) Programme is built on a shared set of guiding principles . They are that the Heritage, Culture & Creativity Programme policies will:
- be **valued** by all
 - be **inclusive**, recognising and respecting the diversity of our society
 - bring **equitable** access to opportunities and experience
 - **enhance** the lives of people and communities
 - be economically sustainable

10. As part of the HCC Programme, the Historic Environment Policy will contribute to a greater whole – that of the shared impact that our Heritage, Culture and Creativity can make to people and places.

Challenges

11. The historic environment in Northern Ireland is in decline. We know this because surveys to monitor the condition of listed buildings⁶ and monuments⁷ have given us this data. A further survey of listed building and scheduled monument owners⁸ identified specific problems and opportunities for people who own heritage assets.
12. In the Listed Buildings and Monument Owners Surveys, people told us:
- With the economic downturn there is less money to invest
 - It takes too long to get permissions
 - Condition is getting worse
 - Heritage at Risk has doubled
 - There is a lack of digital access to information, guidance and resources
 - There is a lack of evidence and visibility of the sector
 - There is a lack of skilled people
 - There is a lack of measurable metrics for the benefits of heritage
 - It's hard to get the right advice

⁶ Survey on the Condition of Listed Buildings | Department for Communities

⁷ Survey of the condition of scheduled historic monuments (internal DfC research based upon monitoring, 2024)

⁸ Market failure in heritage | Department for Communities

- The non-monetary benefits of heritage are poorly understood
- There is a lack of funding for heritage
- Heritage projects are seen as too difficult
- Heritage is seen as elitist
- Heritage is seen as not adaptable
- Heritage is seen as too expensive
- There is a misunderstanding of regulation versus protection

13. While all of the historic environment is vulnerable to climate change, many historic monuments occupy exposed or rural settings and are particularly vulnerable to climate-related pressures such as more frequent storms, high winds and intense rainfall, which accelerate decay in high-level masonry and

destabilise earthworks. Without targeted intervention, losses that have survived famine, war and industrial change risk becoming irreversible within a generation.

14. As shown in Figure 1, below, in the 2024 Listed Building Condition Survey the overall condition of the majority of buildings was rated as Very good/Good or Average (61.3%). However this appears to be a 24.4 percentage point worsening in 20 years when compared to the 2004/05 figure. The rate of decline is accelerating there was an 8.8 percentage point reduction between 2004/05 and 2014/15, a 15.6 percentage point reduction over a similar ten year period between 2014/15 and 2024 (note there are differences in survey methodology between the 2002-2005 survey and subsequent surveys).

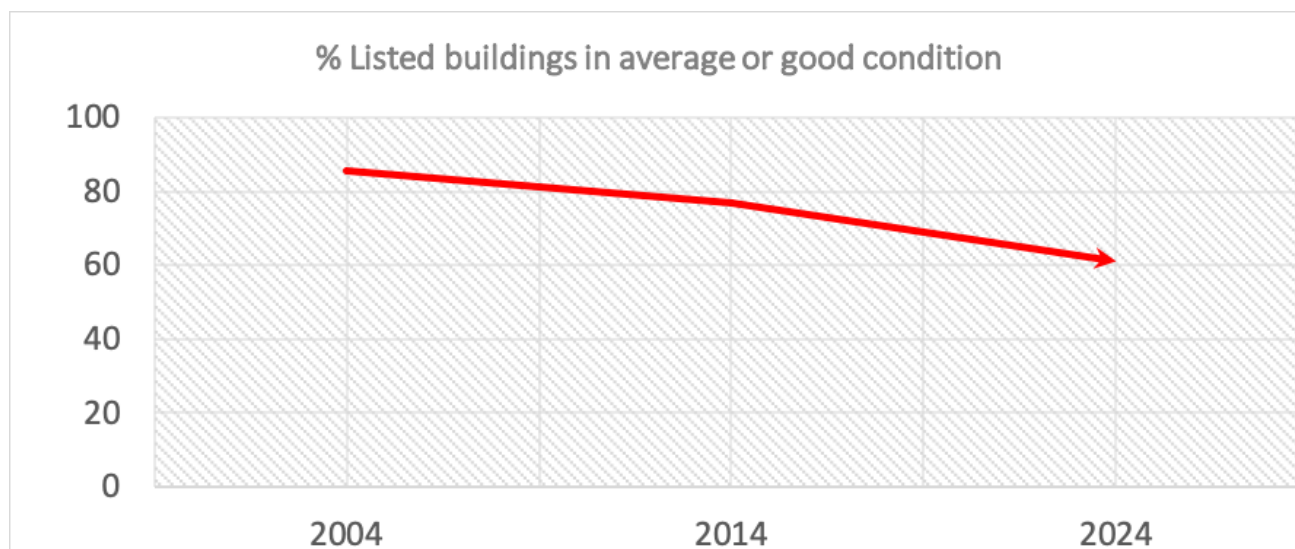


Figure 1 - showing a downward trend in condition of listed buildings over a twenty year period; Note there are differences in survey methodology between the 2002-2005 survey and subsequent surveys.

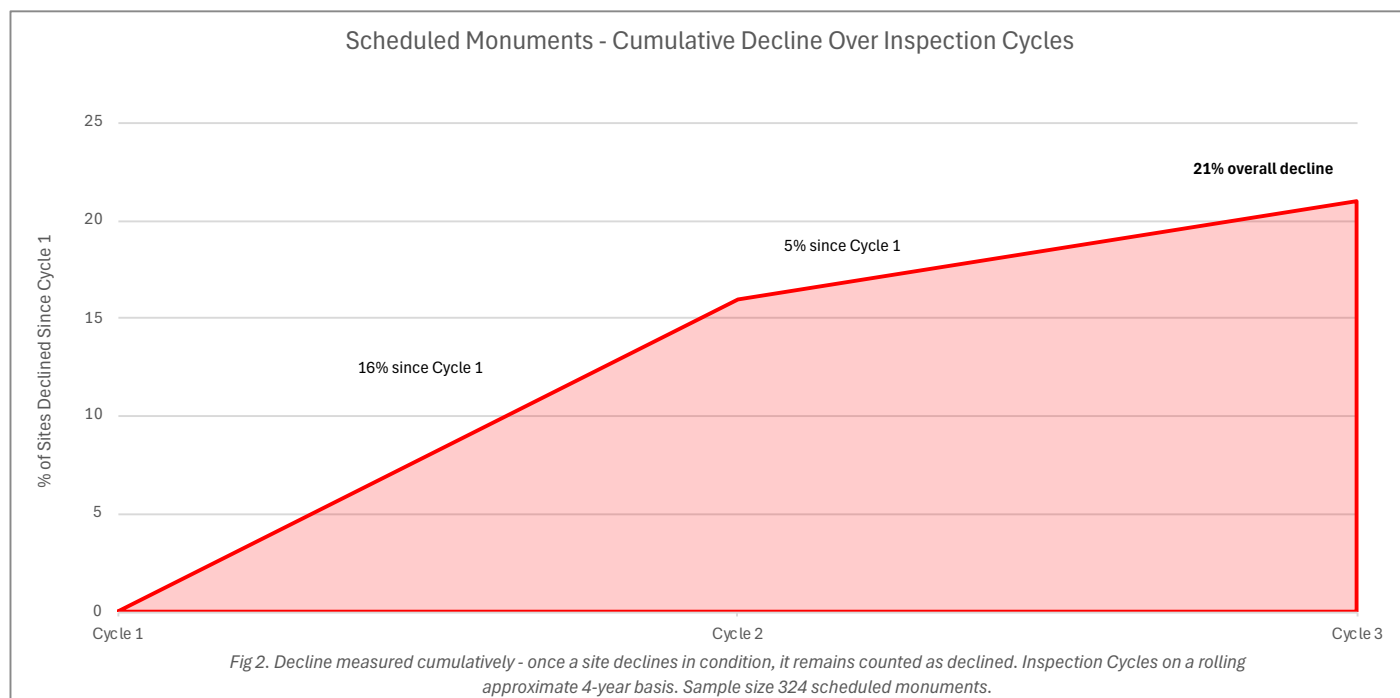


Figure 2 – showing Decline measured cumulatively – once a site declines in condition, it remains counted as declined. Inspection Cycles on a rolling approximate 4-year basis. Sample size 324 Scheduled Historic Monuments.

15. As shown in Figure 2, in the Monument Condition survey a sample of 324 Monuments across three maintenance cycles shows that over 20% of sites have declined in just over a decade.
16. In 2024/25, there were 1,148 historic buildings and structures on this database, just over double the 527 structures recorded in 2018/19. This survey is not comprehensive, and no claim is made to full coverage, but it provides an indication of trends and need. The survey points to a very stark figure. It is also a growing inventory of untapped potential.
17. There were a further 33 monuments on the HARNI register (HARNI Register as of March 2024).
18. There have been a number of high profile incidents at Heritage at Risk buildings over recent years. Evidence has shown that long term neglect can result in collapse or concerns of collapse without timely intervention. In an era of changing climate such incidents are likely to increase as heavier rain and stronger winds will take a greater toll on buildings that are not well maintained.
19. There is also unequal access to the historic environment. In (NISRA)'s annual **Continuous Household Survey 2024-25** adults with a disability were found to be less likely to have visited a place of historic interest than those without a disability (56% and 67% respectively). Analysis by deprivation level showed that adults living in the least deprived areas were more likely to have visited a place of historic interest than those living in the most deprived areas (80% and 51% respectively). In 24/25 a higher proportion

of adults from the Protestant community had visited a place of historic interest within the previous year (69%) than those from the Catholic community (55%).

Funding and investment in the historic environment

20. Overall investment in the historic environment is hard to estimate. Most funding comes from asset owners, but official statistics do not isolate the amount of work that is spent each year on heritage assets. The NI Statistics and Research Agency records that between October and December 2025 £460m was spent on repair and maintenance work in Northern Ireland. This equates to 36% of total output by contractors and public sector labour organisations in that quarter. A proportion of this will have been on heritage assets.

21. The heritage sector also invests in heritage assets. The Historic Environment Stakeholder Group have published research⁹ to show that in 2023/24 £24,791,723 was invested by its members including DfC, Architectural Heritage Fund, National Churches Trust, National Trust, Maritime Belfast Trust, and the National Lottery Heritage Fund in heritage assets. The vast majority of this (96%) was from the Lottery. In addition, DfC invested £864,706 in the maintenance and display of State Care Monuments in the same year.

22. The Department for Communities' Historic Environment Fund (HEF) has been running since 2016. Through four streams: Repair,

Regeneration, Research and Revival the fund has financially supported the care, repair, use, and enjoyment of the historic environment as well as exploring its future potential. Supported projects include the repair of listed homes, businesses and cultural venues, historic monuments and buildings at risk; places of worship have been supported through partnership with National Churches Trust. HEF has contributed to regeneration partnerships like Harnessing Heritage and the Heritage Impact Fund with the Architectural Heritage Fund, the Heritage at Risk Project with Ulster Architectural Heritage, whose officers also partner with DfC, DAERA and the NI housing Executive on the Village Catalyst project.

23. HEF research and revival streams help to demonstrate the huge potential the the historic environment has beyond physical assets. HEF funding has led to new archaeological discoveries and projects like an intergenerational event between primary school children and their grandparents to talk about their vernacular buildings.

24. The statistics quoted earlier recording the significant rise in heritage at risk since 2019 indicate that, despite some high-profile successes, this investment is not enough. There is clearly market failure in addressing the extent of the need currently faced by our heritage assets.

25. Research carried out in 2020 for DfC which compared heritage at risk figures across the UK to house prices demonstrated that this market failure

⁹ NI HERITAGE DELIVERS 2026 CASE STUDIES AND STATISTICS ON HOW HERITAGE BENEFITS NORTHERN IRELAND | Heritage Delivers

is greater in Northern Ireland than in other parts of the UK with the exception of Wales. This appears to equate to property price differences where property prices are lower here, but construction costs are not significantly different.

26. This is important for all of us because research has shown that heritage assets are a public good i.e they bring benefits to society beyond the economic benefits that an owner may receive. Heritage assets can deliver authentic and attractive places which increase our understanding, pride, character and identity, leading to improved wellbeing and community engagement, and delivering prosperity through tourism, investment, skills, regeneration and creativity. Places which are not well cared for can have the opposite effect, creating an air of neglect and reduced community confidence.

27. Responses to this consultation will assist in prioritising funding within the context of the challenges and the potential offered by the historic environment and the greater budgetary context. Work is underway to consider how future funding can support the opportunities that our historic environment presents into the future:

- Support Heritage-led regeneration.
- Tackle Heritage at Risk.
- Address market failure in heritage investment.
- Support town centres, housing and economic development.

- Build heritage skills and employment.
- Deliver on the policy's "Strengthen, Connect and Innovate" principles.

Opportunities

28. In May 2026 the NI Historic Environment Stakeholder Group published 'Heritage Delivers: Case Studies and Statistics on how heritage benefits Northern Ireland'¹⁰. This was organised into four areas where heritage is and can make a positive difference:

- a. Driving economic and social regeneration.
- b. Helping to deliver net zero and sustainable development goals.
- c. Acting as a key resource for health and wellbeing.
- d. Acting as an important resource for learning and developing skills.

26. The document shows how heritage assets are a key resource that can be utilised to attract visitors and inward investment, retain population and aid development right across Northern Ireland and that it has potential to become an important tool in delivering solutions to the housing crisis and the decline of town centres.

27. As they often are existing structures that can be adapted and reused, heritage assets can reduce the use of carbon intensive construction techniques. Protected historic monuments on farmland are also an important repository of biodiversity and of carbon capture on peatland.

¹⁰ NI HERITAGE DELIVERS 2026 CASE STUDIES AND STATISTICS ON HOW HERITAGE BENEFITS NORTHERN IRELAND | Heritage Delivers

28. Engaging with heritage has been statistically proven¹¹ to have significant positive physical and mental health impacts. This can be enhanced if heritage sites are used creatively and actively promoted. There are also significant opportunities for volunteering associated with heritage sites.
29. Heritage assets also remind us that history is not as straightforward as sometimes portrayed, and archaeology continues to reveal new stories. Taken together, this stimulates interest and unlocks learning. The 2023 Independent Review of Education in Northern Ireland recommended that ‘Local heritage should be formally integrated throughout the curriculum (a new policy is required). This may engage more learners including disadvantaged learners and allow them to connect with their local community.’
30. Heritage skills are often specialist and attract increased remuneration. There is strong potential for a society that values its heritage to develop a robust skills base that contributes to its economy and its exports.
31. Policy which builds on this energy, by reaching out to people who don’t normally get involved, could widen our understanding and therefore amplify public interest in caring for our heritage. There is also potential to capitalise on the trend towards heritage activity which is growing through the next generation – in 2022 70% of young people had engaged with heritage¹².
32. Research has also shown that increasing the value that owners, and the public, place on the historic environment can lead to increased investment by both owners and other bodies¹³. Targeted investment to encourage this change, as well as initiatives to leverage additional support to the sector, holds out an opportunity to address decline and to realise the potential that this resource holds for us.
33. Ultimately, the aim of any historic environment policy must be to bring the management of heritage assets onto a more long-term sustainable footing and ensure that their potential to deliver for our people, planet and prosperity can be fully realised.

11 Wellbeing and Historic Environment: Why Bother? | Historic England

12 Experience of culture, arts and heritage by young people in Northern Ireland 2022 | Department for Communities

13 Market Failure Analysis of the Heritage Sector in Northern Ireland

The matrix below sets out 17 draft aims proposed for Historic Environment Policy. The new policy will rest on these aims, and you are invited, in your consultation response, to offer your views on them.

		1. People and Communities	2. Places	3. Partnerships
Historic Environment	Strengthening: A well-cared for historic environment where best practice is universal.	1. Developing best practice to identify and safeguard our historic environment 2. Developing a highly skilled workforce to conserve and sustainably develop our historic environment	3. Investing in the capacity of owners, volunteers and organisations to care for and use local historic assets to meet their needs 4. Empowering communities to adapt, enhance and re-use historic assets, drive regeneration and shape distinctive places	5. Using heritage assets to contribute to Programme for Government including the Wellbeing Framework: Stronger Economy, Better Homes, Healthier Lives and Brighter Futures 6. Maintaining and managing the historic environment in the face of environmental problems
	Connecting: Thriving places - where the unique value of heritage is understood and enjoyed.	7. Supporting inclusive and diverse access to historic places for everyone 8. Exploring the potential for historic places to support wellbeing, and quality of life	9. Aligning the care of heritage assets with distinctive places, landscapes, and seascapes, supporting biodiversity 10. Proudly showcasing, promoting and marketing our unique historic environment locally and internationally 11. Embedding transboundary and international cooperation into the historic environment sector	12. Partnering with government departments, public bodies, and agencies, as well as asset owners, land owners and volunteers, to use the historic environment creatively 13. Reaching out: supporting heritage education and activity for inspiration, learning and enjoyment. 14. Evolving our shared understanding through accessible research, surveys, records, artefacts and archives
	Innovating: A flourishing historic environment sector which is protected, sustained, accessed and used to its full potential .	15. Emphasising the contribution of our historic places to peace - community cohesion, good relations and healing through heritage	16. Collaborating with others to magnify an evidence base for the catalytic effect of heritage investment	17. Driving innovation and enterprise in the historic environment sector towards research, new technologies and new ways of working

Our People. Our Past. Our Place: an inclusive and valued historic environment that delivers for Northern Ireland.

POLICY DIRECTION

How does Historic Environment Policy propose that we meet these challenges and take forward these opportunities?

Strengthening

Protection

34. We will continue to safeguard our historic environment. However, to realise this aim, action like reviewing and evolving

our legislation or designation in line with international conventions is needed. Any changes we make will accord with our own Conservation Principles. The Listed Building and Scheduled Monument Owners' Surveys¹⁴ suggest that building owners agree with this ethos.

The six key conservation principles are:

- Principle 1 - The historic environment is of value to us all
- Principle 2 - Everyone should be able to participate in sustaining the historic environment
- Principle 3 - Understanding the significance of heritage assets is vital
- Principle 4 - Heritage assets shall be managed to sustain their significance
- Principle 5 - Decisions about change shall be reasonable, transparent and consistent
- Principle 6 - Documenting and learning from decisions is essential.

35. Owners want policy to be strong on protecting important buildings and features for people now and for future generations; however, they also want it to be applied in a reasonable way so heritage can be safeguarded whilst making it functional.

36. For some there is a perception that designation means a halt to progress. This is not the case. Legislation, policy and international charters are about respecting historic character in tandem with managing change - not preventing it.

37. In a future where the historic environment is key to our way of life, we will promote a better understanding of protection along with better access to information, advice and support to help people make optimal use of their heritage assets. With the tools to do this accessible to everyone, education and understanding about our historic places and about what conservation means will safeguard the historic environment. Pride in our places will mean that we care about them, understanding their significance¹⁵ and will help towards making sure they are there for future generations.

¹⁴ Listed Buildings Survey

¹⁵ Glossary of conservation terms | Department for Communities

Upskilling to meet demand

38. We will respond to the need to build up skills across the many sectors which feed into and sustain our historic environment. This human resource is fundamental to ensuring that future generations also benefit from our heritage assets. The Owners' Survey identified a key obstacle to owning a listed building was difficulty finding skilled contractors and/or sourcing suitable materials.
39. Skilled and heritage experienced contractors and professionals to discover, maintain, conserve, enhance, study and manage the historic environment are needed to secure a positive future for our places. A thriving, multi-sector heritage skills landscape could offer life-long careers, attract people through established learning pathways, with upskilling and apprenticeship training which includes heritage experience and certification resulting in good jobs and qualification¹⁶ – attracting talent. This need is shared with Northern Ireland's Construction Sector as a whole. Most heritage-relevant skills are transferrable to other parts of the construction industry¹⁷ - which could make an even bigger contribution to a sustainable 'green' economy here. Heritage skills also underpin the success of other sectors such as the museums, film and tourism industries.

40. But skills springing from the historic environment are not unique to heritage – our cultural, tourism and creative sectors also rely on the historic environment for employment. To further this aim, we want to make the most of the potential our historic environment offers because it can spark creativity and imagination - and also be a profitable asset ¹⁸.

Connecting

Engagement, Access and Inclusion

41. Many people living and visiting here already enjoy their historic environment. European Heritage Open Days a free event which take place every September in Northern Ireland is the most widely celebrated cultural event shared by the people of Europe. In 2024/25, 64% of adults here had visited a place of historic interest, the same figure as in 2023/24. District Council, voluntary and community driven initiatives, cultural festivals, and heritage organizations who host talks, tours, exhibitions and events currently embrace and enjoy their local heritage. We will continue to support and amplify people's access to and enjoyment of this part of our environment.
42. Work that can be done by the heritage sector to be more 'outward-facing', removing barriers to advice, representing and addressing the needs and concerns of society and having information which is accessible across all users of the historic

¹⁶ Skills Barometer 2021 update | Department for the Economy

¹⁷ Construction Survey published by the Construction Employers Federation (CEF) – the top four priorities:

- Attracting new entrants by promoting construction careers in schools and communities
- Identifying skills needs and providing specific training tailored to the industry
- Development of entry-level skills programmes
- Enhancing the understanding of routes into the construction industry

¹⁸ Cultural Heritage, Creativity and the Creative Economy | Heritage Counts | Historic England

environment will support people and communities to better understand and care for their assets. A common question is ‘who decides what is ‘significant’? Historic places aren’t always viewed in the same way by everyone. Different people place more importance on different aspects of heritage that are personal to them. Some people connect to their heritage through traditions, music and language. Some place more emphasis on tangible structures; there are different definitions of ‘heritage’. Northern Ireland’s heritage is in some cases contested. There can be a reluctance to engage with some aspects of our historic environment because of those associations. To work towards this aim, we will support a future where our historic environment is strongly associated with building connections.

- 43. Not everyone can access historic places, but it is relevant to us all. And so, a fully documented and cared for historic environment should deliver rewards equally for people from all walks of life. Contemporary presentation and interpretation of heritage could include the better use of technology, bringing heritage to new audiences.
- 44. In many cases, it’s only when people enjoy learning what is distinct and relevant about their own place that they begin to consider its value. And usually then, they also want to look after it.

Landscapes and Seascapes and biodiversity

- 45. The distinction between natural and built environments is often blurred; these places must be managed in ways that reflect the interconnected character of natural and cultural values. With 80% of our 1.4 million hectares of land in agricultural use, it is unsurprising that the majority of archaeological and heritage features are found on farmland. To meet this challenge, we will support people to care for their special landscapes, while recognising the need for them to use their land productively.
- 46. Surrounded by the sea and home to Lough Neagh, the UK’s largest freshwater lake, our freshwater, marine and coastal environments are rich in cultural significance, both above and below the waterline. These areas contain a wealth of underwater cultural heritage, including shipwrecks, submerged landscapes, and coastal structures that reflect centuries of human activity, conflict, and industry. These underwater cultural heritage assets are irreplaceable and increasingly vulnerable to environmental change, development pressures and rising sea levels.
- 47. The Historic Environment Policy will support work to identify, conserve, and protect both terrestrial and underwater heritage. Historic urban and rural places can support nature recovery networks, biodiversity net gain and habitat connectivity.

Places and Tourism

48. Our coasts, landscapes and waterways are vital not only for biodiversity and climate resilience, but also for tourism, recreation and cultural understanding. The safeguarding of these environments, both terrestrial and marine, facilitates enduring public engagement with heritage, ensuring that future generations can continue to access, understand, enjoy and use heritage assets above and beneath the waterline.

49. Our historic environment has value to people here, but it also has wider shared island, pan-UK and in fact has global value. This policy will recognise that, having been shaped by globally important historic events, our historic environment offers opportunities to relate with others internationally who feel connected to us. In the nations Brand Index 2025, Northern Ireland's top two Attributes were Natural Beauty (21st out of 50) and Environment (20th). Since 2016, all 23 Attribute scores have shown improvement. The most notable increases were in respondents' willingness to work and live here (+0.35) and perceptions of Northern Ireland as being rich in historic buildings (+0.29). In terms of ranking, historic buildings (along with natural beauty) achieved the largest improvement, each rising three places.

Innovating

50. Historic environment policy will support the protection of our heritage assets. But a key focus of our Historic Environment Policy is a departure from historic environment protection and designation being seen as restrictive.

Instead, the policy will demonstrate how the historic environment is an enabler.

51. The policy aspires to collect and use evidence which is specific to here to demonstrate the relationship between our heritage and culture and their ability to contribute to nearly all wellbeing indicators within the Programme for Government.

52. Creating an evidence base will connect potential to action, supporting activity and investment to contribute much more broadly to people's specific needs: quality of life, to good places to live and to sustaining and to improving the environment. Through a more thorough understanding of how heritage assets act as springboards to stimulate positive social, economic and environmental impacts, investing in our historic environment will more visibly be common sense. This potential impact has been explored in the Strategic Environmental Assessment of this policy. (This document can be found alongside this Background Document on the Historic Environment Policy Consultation page).

53. As such, the policy will provide the basis for the investment of public funding of the historic environment and serve as a guide for the strategic planning of government departments, District Councils, and for individual organisations, owners, users and visitors.

54. Much more broadly than this, the policy sets out the basic principles needed to sustain the historic environment into the future. The principle of 'Strengthening, Connecting and Innovating' our

historic environment, identified by the Culture, Arts and Heritage Taskforce, fits with this concept which relates to sustainable development: boosting any one part of this ecosystem will produce benefits for the others. Equally, a decline in any one part can have a detrimental effect on the others.

55. In reality, the Historic Environment is not a single ‘entity’ in itself – it is so widely distributed and so much a part of our day to day lives that it contributes to, affects and is affected by multiple other strategies, policies and ambitions like:

- Programme for Government 2024-2027
- The Green Growth Strategy
- Architecture and Built Environment Policy NI
- Draft Tourism Strategy for NI – 10-year plan – Department for Economy

Joint Heritage, Culture and Creativity Programme-wide Actions

56. Engagement across the areas covered by the first phase of the Heritage, Culture and Creativity (HCC) Programme has generated a number of common themes and issues which address many of the challenges and opportunities that our research has uncovered. These themes may be considered for action on a **programme-wide basis, applied to the historic environment sector, but also arts, public libraries and museums**. These include:

- a. A desire to address the capital needs of the sectors, in terms of routine maintenance, investment to address access, environmental

and health and safety requirements and a coherent approach to strategic capital development;

- b. Growing evidence of the social and economic value of the sectors and their intrinsic importance to individuals, communities and society more generally; the contribution and value of the work of the museums sector to, for example, the priorities established in the Programme for Government might also be included as part of a wider research initiative under the aegis of the Heritage, Culture and Creativity Programme;
- c. The benefits that might be brought through a programme of skills development to include provision in terms of organisational governance, management, investment and fund-raising; in digital potential and skills; supporting professional development and so on, to strengthen the skills base and support sustainability;
- d. The potential to develop networks, within and across sectors, with a view to catalysing new potential and innovative projects and partnerships;
- e. Recognising that public funding is likely to continue to be constrained, the potential to maximise existing funding sources should be explored along with approaches to generating new income streams and funding options.

POLICY ACTIONS – HAVE YOUR SAY

57. Your views on our proposed vision, aims and suggested sector-wide actions will contribute to a Policy which will demonstrate government’s approach to realising the potential of Northern Ireland’s historic environment; will be a material consideration in decision making at high-level; and will provide a long-term vision, clear aims and measurable metrics which are monitored to ensure it is the most effective tool to help the historic environment deliver for people in Northern Ireland.

The Draft Vision for Historic Environment Policy

In the consultation questionnaire you are also invited to offer your views on the draft vision for the policy, which is intended to describe succinctly what the policy is aiming to achieve.

We propose the following vision:

“Our People. Our Past. Our Place: an inclusive and valued historic environment that delivers for Northern Ireland.”

The Draft Policy Aims

58. In developing the draft policy aims, the Department has taken account of:

- Legislative duties and Policy for the protection and management of the historic environment
- International conventions, charters and declarations
- Government policy priorities, including the Programme for Government
- Stakeholder engagement
- Literature review and best practice from the UK, Ireland and internationally
- The Strategic Environmental Assessment consultation developed as part of this process

59. At the heart of each of the policies developed under the Heritage, Culture and Creativity Programme are three shared drivers: to strengthen, to connect and to innovate, and three common focusses: People & Communities, Places, and Partnerships. When brought together these form a matrix (shown on page 15) which is the basis for the presentation of the policy aims.

OTHER DOCUMENTS RELATING TO THIS CONSULTATION

60. The screening assessments listed below are available for you to consider alongside the Historic Environment Policy vision and aims. There is opportunity to comment on these assessments and how they have shaped this Policy as part

of this consultation. This is because they are relevant to Historic Environment Policy, having been created to consider specific aspects of the Policy around the environment, equality and rural needs.

Strategic Environmental Assessment for Historic Environment Policy

61. In Northern Ireland, Plans and Programmes which may have an impact on the Environment are assessed through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004.

from the implementation of the Policy. Any potential adverse effects, and methods to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset significant adverse effects have been considered and are also described within this report.

62. In March 2025 the Department for Communities submitted an Historic Environment Policy for Northern Ireland Screening Document to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), who confirmed the requirement for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Report to be carried out.

64. You can find a copy of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Report (SEA) for Northern Ireland Historic Environment Policy alongside this Background Document on the Historic Environment Policy Consultation page.

63. Historic Environment Policy is likely to have a significant effect on Northern Ireland's Environment over the next 10 years and beyond. Much of that impact will be positive impacts on the historic environment. This report demonstrates that there are many complementary positive effects on other aspects of the environment which will result

65. You or your organisation may wish to comment on the SEA Environmental Report for Historic Environment Policy. Questions on the SEA are included in the online Citizen Space survey. Alternatively, responses may be sent by email or by post, and/or included in your Historic Environment Policy response as described in the 'How to respond' section of this document.

Equality Impact Assessment for Historic Environment Policy

66. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires that public authorities have due regard to equality issues in carrying out functions relating to Northern Ireland. We have completed an equality screening of the document being consulted upon and have concluded that it does not negatively impact on equality of opportunity for any of the nine categories

specified in Section 75 (religious belief; political opinion; race; age; marital status; sexual orientation; men and women generally; disability; and dependants).

67. You can find a copy of the Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) for Northern Ireland Historic Environment Policy **here**.

Rural Needs Impact Assessment for Historic Environment Policy

68. The Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA) is a process to ensure that all relevant government outputs are examined carefully and objectively to determine whether they have a different impact in rural areas from that elsewhere, because of the characteristics of rural areas. Where necessary the process should also examine what adjustments might be made to reflect rural needs and to ensure that, as far as possible,

public services are accessible on a fair basis to the rural community.

69. The department has considered this policy in relation to the rural community and has found no potential differential impacts.

70. You can find a copy of the Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA) for Northern Ireland Historic Environment Policy **here**.

CONCLUSION

71. Thank you for taking the time to share your views on the draft vision, policy aims and other matters relating to Northern Ireland's historic environment.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A - Northern Ireland has legislation and policy in place to protect and manage heritage assets:

- The Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011¹⁹
- Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects (Northern Ireland) Order 1995²⁰
- Protection of Wrecks Act 1973²¹
- Protection of Military Remains Act 1986²²
- Merchant Shipping Act 1995²³
- The Fisheries Act (Northern Ireland) 1966²⁴
- UK Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009²⁵
- The Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013²⁶
- Nature conservation and Amenity Lands (Northern Ireland) Order 1985²⁷
- Treasure Act 1996²⁸
- The Finance Act 1976 – (Conditional Exemption)

Changes to heritage assets and their wider environments are managed through existing plans, policies and programmes like:

- Regional Development Strategy²⁹
- Strategic Planning Policy Statement³⁰
- The Environmental Improvement Plan for Northern Ireland 2024³¹
- NI Executive Sustainable Development

A detailed consideration of how Historic Environment policy might support or be supported by this **legislation** is included in the Strategic Environmental Assessment of Historic Environment Policy here.

19 Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011

20 Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects (Northern Ireland) Order 1995

21 Protection of Wrecks Act 1973

22 Protection of Military Remains Act 1986

23 Merchant Shipping Act 1995

24 Fisheries Act (Northern Ireland) 1966

25 Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 - Explanatory Notes

26 Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013

27 The Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Northern Ireland) Order 1985

28 Treasure Act 1996

29 Regional Development Strategy 2035 | Department for Infrastructure

30 The Strategic Planning Policy Statement | Department for Infrastructure

31 Environmental Improvement Plan for Northern Ireland 2024 | www.the-ies.org

APPENDIX B

The UK has signed **international conventions, charters and declarations**

which protect heritage assets like:

- The Athens Charter for the Restoration of Historic Monuments (ICOMOS) (1931)
- The Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (The 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in Event of Armed Conflict and its two (1954 and 1999) Protocols)³²
- The Venice Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) (1964)³³
- The UNESCO World Heritage Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural³⁴ and Natural Heritage (1972)³⁵
- The Declaration of Amsterdam (1975)³⁶
- The Florence Charter 1981 (ICOMOS) (Historic Parks and Gardens)³⁷
- The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance (The Burra Charter 1979, 2013 Revision)³⁸
- The Granda Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage (1985)³⁹
- The Valetta Convention on Protection of Archaeology - 1992)⁴⁰
- The UNESCO Nara Document on Authenticity (1994)⁴¹
- The ICOMOS Charter on the Built Vernacular Heritage (1999)⁴² (cont'd)
- The European Landscape Convention (Florence, 2000)⁴³
- The ICOMOS Charter – Principles for the Analysis, conservation and structural Restoration of Architectural Heritage (Victoria Falls 2003)⁴⁴
- The Leeuwarden Declaration 2018⁴⁵
- UNESCO Convention on Underwater Heritage (2001)⁴⁶
- United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea⁴⁷
- UNESCO Convention on the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003)⁴⁸

32 The_1954_hague_convention_for_the_protection_of_cultural_property_in_the_event_of_armed_conflict_and_its_two_-_1954_and_1999.pdf

33 https://openarchive.icomos.org/id/eprint/432/1/Monuments_and_Sites_1_Charters_Petzet.pdf

34 Cultural heritage | UNESCO UIS

35 1972, Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage – ICOMOS CIVVIH

36 Declaration of Amsterdam.doc

37 Microsoft Word - Engl. Florence Charter.doc

38 Burra Charter 2013 (Adopted 31.10.2013)

39 Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe (Granada, 1985) - Culture and Cultural Heritage

40 Convention for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage of Europe (revised) (Valletta, 1992) - Culture and Cultural Heritage

41 Nara Document on Authenticity, Report of the Experts Meeting, November 1994

42 Microsoft Word - Engl. Vernacular Heritage.doc

43 The European Landscape Convention (Florence, 2000)

44 Microsoft Word - Engl. Structures.doc

45 Europa Nostra endorses Leeuwarden Declaration on Adaptive Re-Use of Built Heritage - Europa Nostra

46 Underwater Cultural Heritage 2001 Convention | UNESCO

47 UNCLOS+ANNEXES+RES.+AGREEMENT

48 Text of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage - UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage

A detailed consideration of how Historic Environment policy might support or be supported by these signed **international conventions, charters and declarations** is included in the Strategic Environmental Assessment of Historic Environment Policy. You can find a copy of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Report (SEA) for Northern Ireland Historic Environment Policy alongside this Background Document on the Historic Environment Policy Consultation page.