

River Basin Management Plans 2015 - 2021

Screening Matrix for the River Basin Plans

(in accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitat Directive)

December 2015



An Agency within the Department of the
Environment
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Purpose of screening matrix

This screening matrix contains a record of the screening required by Regulation 43(1) of the **Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended)**, in accordance with the Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC).

Undertaken by: The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) of the Department of the Environment (DOE).

Undertaken on behalf of: DOE.

Undertaken in respect of: The Draft North Eastern River Basin Management Plan, Draft North Western River Basin Management Plan and the Draft Neagh Bann River Basin Management Plan (All December 2014), (**the Plans**)

1.2. Guidance

The screening has been carried out using the following guidance:

“Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites. Methodological Guidance on the Provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC¹”

1.3. The Habitat Regulations Assessment Process

The methodology follows an initial ‘screening stage’ in which the Natura 2000 sites which could potentially be impacted upon by the implementation of the Plans are identified. The Plans are also described and a Test of Likely Significance (TOLS) has been carried out to determine if there are any likely significant effects of the proposals on the conservation objectives of designated Natura 2000 sites.

If any likely significant effects are found, or if it cannot be objectively shown that adverse effects will not occur, the second stage of the process will be entered and the Plans subjected to an ‘Appropriate Assessment’ against the conservation objectives of the designated Natura 2000 sites.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/docs/art6/natura_2000_assess_en.pdf

If it is determined that there are no likely significant effects on the designated sites, a Statement of 'Finding of No Significant Effects' will be prepared to explain how the overall conclusion was arrived at.

2. SCREENING MATRIX

This screening matrix should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- North Eastern Draft River Basin Management Plan (Dec 2014)
- North Western Draft River Basin Management Plan (Dec 2014)
- Neagh Bann Draft River Basin Management Plan (Dec 2014)

- WFD River Basin Management Plans and Programme Of Measures North Eastern RBD Habitats Directive Article 6 Assessment;
- WFD River Basin Management Plans and Programme Of Measures North Western RBD Habitats Directive Article 6 Assessment;
- WFD River Basin Management Plans and Programme Of Measures Neagh Bann RBD Habitats Directive Article 6 Assessment;

The documents identified above are currently available from the weblinks below but from September the weblinks will become redundant but will be available after this date from the Department's new website.

- <http://www.doeni.gov.uk/niea/2015-wfd-north-eastern-river-basin-management-plan>
- <http://www.doeni.gov.uk/niea/2015-wfd-north-western-river-basin-management-plan>
- <http://www.doeni.gov.uk/niea/2015-wfd-neagh-bann-river-basin-management-plan>

- http://www.doeni.gov.uk/niea/habitats_directive_article6_nerbd.pdf
- http://www.doeni.gov.uk/niea/habitats_directive_article6_nwirbd.pdf
- http://www.doeni.gov.uk/niea/habitats_directive_article6_nbirbd.pdf

- Synopsis of responses to consultation on the Plans (in preparation) which will be available on the Department's website in due course.

2.1. Background

Water Framework Directive

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) was established in law in Northern Ireland on 22 December 2003 through the Water Environment (WFD) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003 (SR 2003 No. 544). These regulations identified the Department of the Environment as the competent authority for each river basin district within Northern Ireland. The Department of the Environment is required to coordinate the implementation of the Directive. Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), an agency within the Department, is the lead body on the technical work required for implementation of the WFD. Delivery of the WFD rests with the Department of the Environment, in partnership with the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure and the Department for Regional Development.

An Inter-departmental Board has been established to oversee and coordinate strategic implementation of the Directive. The Board has established an Implementation Working Group to coordinate the activities of government departments and agencies that will be delivering the requirements of the Directive.

WFD is implemented through River Basin Planning which introduces a six-yearly cycle of planning, action and review. Every six years a River Basin Management Plan will be produced for each River Basin District within Northern Ireland.

The first planning cycle covers the period from December 2009 - December 2015, with the second continuing from December 2015 - December 2021.

Information about the Plans

In December 2009, the Department of Environment (the Department) published three River Basin Management Plans as required by the Water Framework Directive (WFD). The Plans are being delivered by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) in conjunction with a number of Northern Ireland Executive Departments: the Department of Environment (DOE);

the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD); the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL); and the Department for Regional Development (DRD).

The Plans identify where our water environment is in a good or excellent condition and set out objectives for the improvement or the prevention of deterioration of individual river, lake, marine and groundwaters for the next three river basin planning cycles to 2015, 2021 and 2027. A Programme of Measures were published as part of the Plan setting out actions required to meet the objectives to improve the status of all water bodies. An interim update on the measures was published in 2012.

As a precursor to this draft update, DOE undertook a consultation on Significant Water Management Issues (SWMI) for the North Eastern, North Western and Neagh Bann RBDs in December 2013. The synopsis of responses received to that consultation is available on the website and has been fully considered for this update.

The WFD requires that the Plan is reviewed and updated every 6 years.

The first Plans in 2009 were designed to be rolling plans that evolve over time. The second cycle plans are modifications and changes made to the first set developed in 2009. The updated Plans outline changes that have taken place during the first cycle and what is proposed for the second cycle.

A strategic environmental assessment under the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive was conducted for the first set of plans in 2009. This identified and assessed the wider environmental impacts of the plans and programmes. A Habitats Directive Article 6 Assessment was carried out in parallel with the SEA process and the findings of the habitats assessment used to guide the development of the alternatives considered as part of the SEA.

The Habitats assessment process on the 2009 Plans has ensured that any potentially significant environmental impacts of the Plans on Natura 2000/Ramsar sites have been identified and a set of alternatives to the measures identified, and subsumed in to the 2009 Plans. However, the nature of the measures mean that there is potential for direct or indirect impacts on sites, and as a result the requirement for the screening for effects or indeed

appropriate assessment itself has been identified where appropriate. The implementation of the Programme Of measures (POMs) are overall highly desirable in order to protect, improve or maintain the current conservation status of many of Northern Irelands Natura 2000/Ramsar sites, and the consequences of not implementing the measures to achieve 'good status' under the WFD would have a far more significant effect on these sites, and in particular on sensitive sites (e.g. Freshwater Pearl Mussel sites). While there are potential effects which could accrue from other Policies, Plans and Programmes, it was identified in the 2009 HRA that these cannot be assessed in combination with the 2009 Plans as the specific implementation details of the Plans and these other Policies, Plans and Programmes at the water body level, are as yet undefined. It was therefore the recommendation of the assessment that screening for potential impacts under the Habitats Directive Article 6 process is put in place once the details of the implementation of the POMs under the 2009 Plans are known, so as to ensure no 'in combination' effects with other Plans and Programmes at the time of implementation. The need for screening for impacts was identified, and developed in consultation with NIEA, to offer guidance to those responsible for future implementation of plans/programmes, however at all times, the appropriate consultation be carried out with NIEA to determine when Appropriate Assessment is necessary.

Following on from this assessment of the 2009 Plans, draft updates to the River Basin Management Plans have now been published and they outline the proposed changes and the modifications to measures for the second river basin planning cycle 2015-2021.

Plan Names

- North Eastern Draft River Basin Management Plan (December 2014);
- North Western Draft River Basin Management Plan (December 2014); and
- Neagh Bann Draft River Basin Management Plan (December 2014).

A Test of Likely Significance (TOLS) has been carried out to determine if there are any likely significant effects of the modifications contained in the new Plans on the conservation objectives of designated Natura 2000 sites.

2.2. Identification of the Natura 2000 Sites which could potentially be impacted

As the Plans cover the whole of Northern Ireland it could potentially impact any of the designated Natura 2000 sites within Northern Ireland; i.e. 57 SACs and 15 SPAs.

Details of all the sites, including names, locations and reasons for designation, are available on the Department's website.

As the Plans may potentially affect any of the designated Natura 2000 sites in Northern Ireland, a spreadsheet for the screening matrix was developed to establish whether the Plans would have a significant impact on the conservation objectives for any features which have been the basis for designation in any of the SPAs and SACs, i.e.:

- SAC habitat features
- SAC species features
- SPA species features

Factors likely to have a detrimental effect are considered for each feature and compared against any likely effect of the Plans. On the basis of this, each feature was then screened in or out for likelihood of the Plans having a significant environmental effect.

The spreadsheet is attached at Annex 1. The results of this screening exercise indicate that the Plans are unlikely to have significant environmental effects on any of the Natura 2000 sites. The reasoning for this is explained further in Sections 2.3 to 2.6 below.

2.3. Description of individual elements of the Plans (alone or in combination with other plans or projects) which may give rise to impacts on Natura 2000 sites

The modifications to measures within the Plans which are considered as potentially having an effect on Natura 2000 sites fall in the following categories:

- Modifications related to the review of statutory regulatory powers, licensing and the introduction of controls;
- Modifications which relate to the implementation of actions detailed in other Strategy documents, action plans, schemes or programmes;
- Modifications related to evidence gathering, monitoring, research and identification of source pressures measures;
- Modifications which require partnership working;
- Modifications related to education and awareness measures;

Full details of these modifications can be found in the draft Plans.

The modifications proposed as part of the Plans will make valuable contributions to the integration of environmental considerations and sustainable development within the context of the measures assessed as part of the 2009 Plans. While the 2009 measures and the draft 2015-21 modifications in combination will potentially have a significant positive environmental effect, in particular with regard to water quality, the modifications taken in isolation would not be regarded as having the potential to have a significant environmental effect.

2.4. Description of any likely direct, indirect or secondary impacts of the Plans (alone or in combination with other plans or projects) on Natura 2000 sites

The Habitats assessment process on the 2009 Plans has ensured that any potentially significant environmental impacts of the Plans on Natura 2000/Ramsar sites have been identified and a set of alternatives to the measures identified, and subsumed in to the 2009 Plans. However, the nature of the 2009 measures mean that there is potential for direct or indirect impacts on sites, and as a result the requirement for the screening for effects or indeed appropriate assessment itself has been identified where appropriate. The implementation of the 2009 POMs were identified as being overall highly desirable in order to protect, improve or maintain the current conservation status of many of Northern Ireland's Natura 2000/Ramsar sites, and the consequences of not implementing the measures to

achieve 'good status' under the WFD would have a far more significant effect on these sites, and in particular on sensitive sites (e.g. Freshwater Pearl Mussel sites). While there are potential effects which could accrue from other Policies, Plans and Programmes, these cannot be assessed in combination with the 2009 Plans as the specific implementation details of the Plans and these other Policies, Plans and Programmes at the water body level, are as yet undefined.

For example, as identified in the 2009 assessment, adverse effects may occur as a result of the implementation of specific actions resulting from POM's or other policies, plans and programmes, such as, the construction of waste water treatment infrastructure and measures to improve the treatment capability at WWTW and reduce intermittent discharges from sewerage networks. The latter may reduce numbers of certain bird species as a result of less primary productivity and therefore a reduced food source, although this effect is uncertain.

However, as the specific details of the implementation of the POM's is not known at this stage e.g. location of new infrastructure, the efficacy of new or upgraded waste water treatment or even if funds will be available to implement such actions, it is not possible to do an appropriate assessment on individual POM's at this stage.

It was therefore the recommendation of the 2009 assessment that screening for potential impacts under the Habitats Directive Article 6 process is put in place once the details of the implementation of the POMs under the 2009 Plans are known, so as to ensure no 'in combination' effects with other Plans and Programmes at the time of implementation. This recommendation is still valid and is extended to include the 2009 POM's and their draft 2014 modifications.

The need for screening for impacts was identified, and developed in consultation with NIEA, to offer guidance to those responsible for future implementation of plans/programmes, however at all times, the appropriate consultation should be carried out with NIEA to determine when Appropriate Assessment is necessary. This conclusion of the 2009 TOLS is still applicable and is also applicable to the 2009 measures and their modifications, where relevant, as proposed in the draft 2014 Plans.

The screening spreadsheet indicates that SAC sites, and the features identified in their designation, will not be adversely affected by the Plans, and therefore, no adverse impact would be likely at these sites.

However, for SPA's a potentially indirect significant effect as been identified resulting from the potential improvements in water quality .i.e. the potential reduction in food availability. Such effects, if they occur, would be site specific and as the specific details of the POM's are not yet known it is not possible to carry out further assessment, at this stage. Such potential effects have therefore been screened out at this stage with the recommendation that further screening be carried out once implementation details are known.

For sites containing features which may be affected by the Plans, any likely direct, indirect or secondary impacts of the Plans (alone or in combination with other plans or projects) are considered below for the groups of modifications outlined in Section 2.3.

2.4.1. Modifications related to the review of statutory regulatory powers, licensing and the introduction of controls;

Modifications of measures related to the review of statutory regulatory powers, licensing and the introduction of controls will result in overall positive impacts to the environment. However specific modifications may result in impacts on the industries affected and may have potential negative impacts on economic development. Indirect negative impacts are also possible for other environmental receptors dependent upon the required changes e.g. new infrastructure which would impact upon biodiversity and soils or changes to existing practices that could impact upon air quality or climate from transport or alternate treatment and disposal.

At the Plan level the details of such changes is not yet known or the locations that they may be utilised. Therefore it is only possible to assess such measures generally. This level of assessment was carried out as part of the 2009 SEA Environmental Report and TOLS.

The modifications would be expected to have overall positive effects on Natura 2000 sites, in particular with regard to water quality.

Consideration of the spreadsheet attached at Annex 1 indicates that there are no likely detrimental impacts of these modifications on Natura 2000 sites.

2.4.2. Modifications which relate to the implementation of actions detailed in other Strategy documents, action plans, schemes or programmes;

Modifications of measures which relate to the implementation of actions detailed in other Strategy documents, action plans, schemes or programmes are assumed to have been environmentally assessed, where appropriate, under the processes and procedures which resulted in their creation.

For those strategies, plans etc not yet created, it is not possible to have them assessed as the details are not yet known. However, as recommended in the 2009 SEA and TOLS they should be subject to the requisite assessment in due course.

Consideration of the spreadsheet attached at Annex 1 indicates that there are no likely detrimental impacts of these modifications on Natura 2000 sites.

2.4.3. Modifications related to evidence gathering, monitoring, research and identification of source pressures measures;

Modifications of measures related to evidence gathering, monitoring, research and identification of source pressures measures continue to build understanding of the baseline environment begun during the Article 5 characterisation process. These modifications are concerned with information gathering rather than the taking of any concrete actions and as such are not suitable for environmental assessment. Therefore such measures and actions were not deemed appropriate for SEA or HRA. Where an implementation stage is included in the measure the absence of specific details on the actions required will necessitate project level environmental assessment commensurate with the scale, location and intent of the planned project.

Consideration of the spreadsheet attached at Annex 1 indicates that there are no likely detrimental impacts of these modifications on Natura 2000 sites.

2.4.4. Modifications which require partnership working;

Modifications related to measures which require partnership working are intangible in nature and not suitable for environmental assessment. Therefore such measures and action are not deemed appropriate for SEA or HRA but the outcomes of such working arrangements may require project level assessments commensurate with their scale, location and intent.

Consideration of the spreadsheet attached at Annex 1 indicates that there are no likely detrimental impacts of these modifications on Natura 2000 sites.

2.4.5. Modifications related to education and awareness measures;

Modifications of measures related to education and awareness measures are intangible in nature and not suitable for environmental assessment. Therefore such measures and action were not deemed appropriate for SEA or HRA.

The modifications would be expected to have positive effects on Natura 2000 sites, in particular with regard to water quality.

Consideration of the spreadsheet attached at Annex 1 indicates that there are no likely significant effects of these modifications on Natura 2000 sites.

2.5. Description of any likely changes to the Natura 2000 sites

As discussed in Section 2.4, for Natura 2000/Ramsar sites containing features which may be affected by the Plans, no likely significant detrimental effects on the sites have been identified, at this stage. Hence, the most likely change resulting from implementation of the Plans modifications, in conjunction with the 2009 measures, is improvement in water quality,

for example, through reduction in diffuse and point source pollution of surface waters and groundwaters.

However, for SPA's a potentially indirect significant effect as been identified resulting from the potential improvements in water quality .i.e. the potential reduction in food availability. Such effects, if they occur, would be site specific and as the specific details of the POM's are not yet known it is not possible to carry out further assessment, at this stage. Such potential effects have therefore been screened out at this stage with the recommendation that further screening be carried out once implementation details are known.

2.6 Description of any likely significant effects to the Natura 2000 sites as whole sites

As discussed in Section 2.3, the screening spreadsheet indicates that no Natura 2000/Ramsar sites, and the features identified in their designation, will be adversely affected by the Plans at this stage, and therefore, no detrimental impact would be likely at these sites.

However, for SPA's a potentially indirect significant effect as been identified resulting from the potential improvements in water quality .i.e. the potential reduction in food availability. Such effects, if they occur, would be site specific and as the specific details of the POM's are not yet known it is not possible to carry out further assessment, at this stage. Such potential effects have therefore been screened out at this stage with the recommendation that further screening be carried out once implementation details are known.

For sites containing features which may be affected by the Plans, any impact resulting from implementation of the Plans is likely to be beneficial to those features, and the site as a whole; i.e. improvement in water quality, e.g. through reduction in diffuse and point source pollution of surface waters and groundwaters.

2.7. Findings and Conclusion of the Test of Likely Significance

The findings of this screening exercise indicate that the modifications proposed for inclusion in the Plans are unlikely to have any significant [detrimental] effects (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) on Natura 2000 sites, at this stage, subject to the recommendation of further screening and assessment, where required, when POM

implementation details become known at a site specific level. This mitigation measure along with EU guidance on 'Links between the Water Framework Directive and Nature Directives' which states: "where artificially changed or created conditions have favoured Natura 2000 species but where those environmental conditions represent less than good ecological status of the WFD, in principle, restoration towards good ecological status prevails (WFD objectives)" will ensure no likely effect of the RBMP modifications.

On the basis of this screening, which was the subject of consultation with specialist teams in NIEA Natural Environment Division, it can be objectively concluded that the implementation of the Plans are not likely to have significant effects on the site selection features of any Natura 2000 site and no further assessment is required, at this stage. The Plans are likely to improve general environmental conditions and be beneficial to the conservation status of the Natura 2000 network.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS STATEMENT

In accordance with Regulation 43(1) of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc) (Northern Ireland) 1995, DOE has considered whether the 3 draft 2015 - 2021 River Basin Management Plans (the Plans) are likely to have a significant effect on any Natura 2000 sites in Northern Ireland. As part of that consideration, DOE has:-

- (a) taken into account any mitigation measures contained in the Plans, along with all legally enforceable obligations designed to avoid environmental effects; and
- (b) applied the precautionary approach set out in Commission Guidance: Managing Natura 2000 Sites and as required by the European Court of Justice in C-127/02 (Waddenzee).

Test of Likely Significance

Name of project or plan.	Draft North Eastern River Basin Management Plan (December 2014); Draft North Western River Basin Management Plan (December 2014); Draft Neagh Bann River Basin Management Plan (December 2014).
Name, location and description of Natura 2000 sites	All Natura 2000 sites in Northern Ireland.
Brief description of the project or plan Size and scale; Land-take; Distance from Natura 2000 site or key features of the site; Resource requirements (water abstraction etc); Emission (disposal to land, water or air); Excavation requirements; Transportation requirements; Duration of construction,	<p>In December 2009, the Department of Environment (the Department) published three River Basin Management Plans as required by the Water Framework Directive (WFD). The Plans are being delivered by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) in conjunction with a number of Northern Ireland Executive Departments: the Department of Environment (DOE); the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD); the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL); and the Department for Regional Development (DRD).</p> <p>The Plans identify where our water environment is in a good or excellent condition and set out objectives for the improvement or the prevention of deterioration of individual river, lake, marine and groundwaters for the next three river basin planning cycles to 2015, 2021 and 2027. A</p>

**operation, de-commissioning etc;
Other.**

Programme of Measures was published as part of the Plan setting out actions required to meet the objectives to improve the status of all water bodies. An interim update on the measures was published in 2012.

As a precursor to this draft update, DOE undertook a consultation on Significant Water Management Issues (SWMI) for the North Eastern RBD in December 2013. The synopsis of responses received to that consultation is available on the website and has been fully considered for this update.

The WFD requires that the Plan is reviewed and updated every 6 years.

The first Plans in 2009 were designed to be rolling plans that evolve over time. The second cycle plans are modifications and changes made to the first set developed in 2009. This draft updated Plans outline changes that have taken place during the first cycle and what we propose for the second cycle.

A strategic environmental assessment under the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive and a Habitats Regulations Assessment was conducted for the first set of plans in 2009. These identified and assessed the wider environmental impacts of the plans and programmes and their specific effects on Natura 2000/ Ramsar sites.

Draft updates to the River Basin Management Plans have now been published and they outline the proposed changes and the modifications to measures for the second river basin planning cycle 2015-2021.

Plan Names

- Draft North Eastern River Basin Management Plan (December 2014);
- Draft North Western River Basin Management Plan (December

	<p>2014); and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Neagh Bann River Basin Management Plan (December 2014).
<p>Is the project or plan directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site (provide details)? If yes proceed no further.</p>	<p>No, however the modifications proposed as part of the Plans will make valuable contributions to the integration of environmental considerations and sustainable development within the context of the measures assessed as part of the 2009 Plans. While the 2009 measures and the draft 2015-21 modifications in combination will potentially have a significant positive environmental effect, in particular with regard to water quality, the modifications taken in isolation would not be regarded as having the potential to have a significant environmental effect, at this stage of plan implementation.</p>
<p>Are there other projects or plans that together with the project or plan being assessed could affect the site (provide details)?</p>	<p>The Habitats assessment process on the 2009 Plans has ensured that any potentially significant environmental impacts of the Plans on Natura 2000/Ramsar sites have been identified and a set of alternatives to the measures identified, and subsumed in to the 2009 Plans. However, the nature of the measures mean that there is potential for direct or indirect impacts on sites, and as a result the requirement for the screening for effects or indeed appropriate assessment itself has been identified where appropriate. The implementation of the POMs are overall highly desirable in order to protect, improve or maintain the current conservation status of many of Northern Irelands Natura 2000/Ramsar sites, and the consequences of not implementing the measures to achieve 'good status' under the WFD would have a far more significant effect on these sites, and in particular on sensitive sites (e.g. Freshwater Pearl Mussel sites). While there are potential effects which could accrue from other Policies, Plans and Programmes, these cannot be assessed in combination with the 2009 Plans as the specific implementation details of the Plans and these other Policies, Plans and Programmes at the water body level, are as yet undefined. It was therefore the recommendation of the assessment</p>

that screening for potential impacts under the Habitats Directive Article 6 process is put in place once the details of the implementation of the POMs under the 2009 Plans are known, so as to ensure no 'in combination' effects with other Plans and Programmes at the time of implementation. The need for screening for impacts was identified, and developed in consultation with NIEA, to offer guidance to those responsible for future implementation of plans/programmes, however at all times, the appropriate consultation should be carried out with NIEA to determine when Appropriate Assessment is necessary. This conclusion of the 2009 TOLS is still applicable and is also applicable to the 2009 measures and their modifications, where relevant, as proposed in the draft 2014 Plans.

The screening spreadsheet (Annex 1) indicates that no Natura 2000/Ramsar sites, and the features identified in their designation, will be adversely affected by the Plans at this stage, and therefore, no impact would be likely at these sites.

However, for SPA's a potentially indirect significant effect as been identified resulting from the potential improvements in water quality .i.e. the potential reduction in food availability. Such effects, if they occur, would be site specific and as the specific details of the POM's are not yet known it is not possible to carry out further assessment, at this stage. Such potential effects have therefore been screened out at this stage with the recommendation that further screening be carried out once implementation details are known.

For sites containing features which may be affected by the Plans, any likely direct, indirect or secondary impacts of the Plans (alone or in combination with other plans or projects) are considered below for the groups of modifications outlined in Section 2.3.

<p>Describe the individual elements of the project or plan (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) likely to give rise to effects on the Natura 2000 site.</p>	<p>The modifications to measures within the Plans which are considered as potentially having an effect on Natura 2000 sites fall in the following categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modifications related to the review of statutory regulatory powers, licensing and the introduction of controls; • Modifications which relate to the implementation of actions detailed in other Strategy documents, action plans, schemes or programmes; • Modifications related to evidence gathering, monitoring, research and identification of source pressures measures; • Modifications which require partnership working; • Modifications related to education and awareness measures; <p>Full details of these modifications can be found in the draft Plans.</p> <p>The modifications proposed as part of the Plans will make valuable contributions to the integration of environmental considerations and sustainable development within the context of the measures assessed as part of the 2009 Plans. As previously discussed, while the 2009 measures and the draft 2014 modifications in combination will potentially have a significant positive environmental effect, in particular with regard to water quality, the modifications taken in isolation would not be regarded as having the potential to have a significant positive environmental effect, at this stage.</p>
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Describe any likely changes/effects on the N2K features arising as a result of: reduction of habitat area; disturbance to key species; habitat or species fragmentation; reduction in species density; changes in key indicators of conservation value (water quality etc).

N2K Feature/ sensitive interest:	Describe any potential direct, indirect or secondary effects of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects):	Finding of Screening Matrix: *Impact considered significant/non-significant
SAC habitat features	Reduction in diffuse and point source water pollution and an	Plan modifications will have no effect on SAC habitat features. However Plan modifications

	improvement in surface water and groundwater quality.	<p>in combination with the measures detailed and assessed in the 2009 Plans are likely to have beneficial impacts. Therefore no significant adverse effects are likely.</p> <p><i>Please see Section 2.4 of the screening matrix and the associated spreadsheet attached at Annex 1 for further details</i></p>
SAC species features	The potential positive effects on some habitats (see above) should be beneficial for species features associated with those habitats.	<p>Plan modifications will have no effect on SAC species features. However Plan modifications in combination with the measures detailed and assessed in the 2009 Plans are likely to have beneficial impacts. Therefore no significant adverse effects are likely.</p> <p><i>Please see Section 2.4 of the screening matrix and the associated spreadsheet attached at Annex 1 for further details</i></p>
SPA species features	For SPA's a potentially indirect significant effect as been identified resulting from the potential improvements in water quality .i.e. the potential reduction in food availability for bird species. Such effects, if they occur, would be site specific and as the specific details of the POM's are not yet known it is not possible to carry out further assessment, at this stage. Such potential effects have therefore been screened out at this stage with the recommendation that further screening be carried out once implementation details are known.	<p>The implementation of the 2009 POMs were identified in the 2009 assessment as being overall highly desirable in order to protect, improve or maintain the current conservation status of SPA sites, and the consequences of not implementing the measures and their 2015 modifications to achieve 'good status' under the WFD would have a far more significant effect on these sites overall. While there are potential effects which could accrue from the POM's and other Policies, Plans and Programmes, on SPA species features these cannot as yet be assessed as the specific implementation details of the POM's and these other Policies, Plans and Programmes at the water body level, are as yet undefined. Therefore no significant adverse effects are likely at this stage</p> <p><i>Please see Section 2.4 of the screening matrix and the associated spreadsheet attached at Annex 1 for further details</i></p>

**Only mitigation measures proposed within application can be considered at this stage.*

Describe any potential effects on the Natura 2000 site as a whole in terms of interference with the key relationships that define the structure or function of the site.

Describe any potential effects on the Natura 2000 sites as whole sites in terms of interference with the key relationships that define the structure or function of the sites	*Effects considered significant/non-significant: Finding of Screening Matrix
<p>As discussed in Section 2.3 of the screening matrix, the screening spreadsheet (Annex 1) indicates that the Natura 2000 sites, and the features identified in their designation, will not be adversely affected by the Plan modifications, and therefore, no negative effects would be expected at these sites, at this stage. For sites containing features which may be affected by the Plan modifications in combination with the 2009 measures, any impact resulting from implementation of the Plans is likely to be beneficial to those features, and the site as a whole; e.g. improvement in water quality through reduction in diffuse and point source pollution of surface waters and groundwaters and potential reduction in ammonia emissions leading to nitrogen deposition and nutrient enrichment of sensitive habitats due to controls on slurry storage and methods of slurry application. However, for SPA's a potentially indirect significant effect as been identified resulting from the potential improvements in water quality .i.e. the potential reduction in food availability. Such effects, if they occur, would be site specific and as the specific details of the POM's are not yet known it is not possible to carry out further assessment, at this stage. Such potential effects have therefore been screened out at this stage with the recommendation that further screening be carried out once implementation details are known.</p>	<p>Plan modifications will have no effect on SAC habitat features. However Plan modifications in combination with the measures detailed and assessed in the 2009 Plans are likely to have beneficial impacts. Therefore no significant adverse effects are likely at this stage, subject to the recommendation of further screening and assessment, where required, when POM implementation details become known at a site specific level.</p>

Is the potential scale or magnitude of any effect likely to be significant?	
Alone?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
In-combination with other projects or plans?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Conclusion: Is the proposal likely to have a significant effect on N2K sites?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

IF IT HAS BEEN DETERMINED THAT THE PROPOSAL WILL NOT HAVE A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT, ASSESSMENT IS COMPLETED. IF ANY PART OF THE PROPOSAL IS LIKELY TO HAVE A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT AN APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT WILL BE REQUIRED – STAGE 2 AA

From the consideration of all the potential effects above it can be objectively concluded that there are not likely to be any significant adverse effects on Natura 2000 sites, at this stage, and no further assessment is required, at this stage.

Data collected to carry out the assessment

Who carried out the assessment?

Neil McAllister (NIEA, DOE)

Sources of data

Documents:

- North Eastern River Basin Management Plan Summary (December 2009);
- North Western River Basin Management Plan Summary (December 2009);
- Neagh Bann River Basin Management Plan Summary (December 2009);

- Water Framework Directive River Basin Management plans and programme of Measures Neagh Bann IRBD Habitats Directive Article 6 Assessment;
- Water Framework Directive River Basin Management plans and programme of Measures North East RBD Habitats Directive Article 6 Assessment;
- Water Framework Directive River Basin Management plans and programme of Measures North West IRBD Habitats Directive Article 6 Assessment;

- Draft North Eastern Draft River Basin Management Plan (December 2014);
- Draft North Western Draft River Basin Management Plan (December 2014);
- Draft Neagh Bann Draft River Basin Management Plan (December 2014);
- Consultation on the draft second cycle River Basin management Plans in the North West, North East and Neagh Bann River Basin Districts Synopsis of Responses – in draft.

Websites:

www.doeni.gov.uk/niea/
<http://jncc.defra.gov.uk>
www.habitas.org.uk/
www.birdlife.org
www.apis.ac.uk
www.iwdg.ie
www.pinnipeds.org/

Consultation with relevant agencies:
NIEA Natural Environment Division:

Level of assessment completed
Level 1 Screening Matrix
Where can the full results of the assessment be accessed and viewed?
<p>For further information please contact:</p> <p>Neil McAllister, Water Management Unit, Northern Ireland Environment Agency, Department of the Environment, 17 Antrim Road, Lisburn, Tonagh, BT28 3AL.</p>
List of Agencies Consulted:
<p>NIEA Natural Environment Division:</p> <p>(Contact details: nieainfo@doeni.gov.uk)</p>
Response to consultation
<p>NIEA Natural Environment Division is of the opinion that the conclusions drawn in the ToLS/Screening Report can be reasonably and objectively accepted.</p>